

# Pets and Diabetes

## PVMA FACT SHEET



Just as diabetes affects more than 20 million Americans, it's also affecting our pets in increasing numbers. Obesity is a contributing factor. Over 50% of our pets are overweight, which puts them at an increased risk of developing diabetes. In fact, obese cats are four times more likely to develop diabetes than cats at a normal weight.

### What is Diabetes?

Diabetes is an endocrine disorder of glucose (blood sugar) metabolism. In a pet with diabetes, its body either does not produce enough insulin (generally seen in canines) or the body cannot respond effectively to the insulin it produces (generally seen in felines). The result of either case is excess sugar in the pet's bloodstream, which can cause problems in the kidneys, eyes, skin and other body systems. If left untreated, or if managed poorly, diabetes can affect all of a pet's organ systems, with sometimes fatal results.

### Symptoms

Signs of early diabetes in cats and dogs include: more frequent urination, increased thirst, increased appetite, unexplained weight loss and lethargy. In more advanced cases, symptoms include: loss of appetite, cataracts (dogs), vomiting, dehydration, weakness, and abnormal gait and muscle loss due to neuropathy (nerve damage).

### Testing & Treatment

- Your veterinarian can diagnose diabetes in your pet through blood and urine tests. Your veterinarian may also test your pet's thyroid levels, progesterone levels (dogs), or test your cat for Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus.

- Losing weight can lead to reversal of the diabetic state in some obese cats. Getting your pet to a proper weight and helping it stay there is very important to its overall health.
- Feed your pet's calories in two meals of equal portions roughly 12 hours apart to help keep blood sugar consistent and help with insulin regulation.
- Insulin may be prescribed, and may need to be administered twice per day.
- At home care may also include regularly monitoring your pet's blood glucose level, checking its urine for glucose and ketones, and keeping track of its weight.
- If you have your pet's insulin prescription filled at a retail pharmacy (rather than your veterinarian's office), verify that the type of insulin you receive is what your veterinarian prescribed. Some types of insulin are not appropriate for certain diabetic pets.
- Be sure to use the correct size and type of syringe so that insulin dosages are administered accurately; an insulin overdose can potentially result in seizures, coma or death.

### Prevention

You can help prevent diabetes by keeping your pet at its ideal weight. Control food intake, and provide it with opportunities to exercise. Talk to your veterinarian about the best diet options for your pet given its specific health needs and activity level.

Your pet should be examined at least annually by your veterinarian to assess any health issues. And, since health changes can occur quickly, older pets should be seen by a veterinarian twice per year. Diabetes is one of the most common endocrine diseases affecting middle-aged and senior pets.

Information courtesy of the Oregon Veterinary Medical Association