

Does Your Pet Have Diabetes?

DON'T PANIC—WE CAN DO THIS TOGETHER!

While a diagnosis of diabetes in your pet may sound scary, this is something we can manage together with the right medical plan!

WHAT IS DIABETES? Diabetes in our pets is similar to diabetes in humans: the body cannot convert glucose into energy due to issues with producing or regulating the hormone insulin.

STEP 1 ▶ Understand what diabetes means for your pet



- Cats and dogs experience diabetes differently, so it's important to understand what we're trying to treat.
- Diabetic dogs lack the cells needed to produce insulin. They will require insulin therapy either once or twice a day for life, usually along with diet changes. Their diabetes is more like type 1 diabetes in people.
- Cats with diabetes generally have insulin resistance, rather than the inability to produce insulin. They will usually require insulin at the beginning of treatment, but because they are still able to produce their own insulin, some will go into remission and eventually be managed using diet alone. Their diabetes more closely resembles type 2 in people.
- **Unlike people, pets can't have an insulin pump or measure their own blood sugar—so you'll have to help them out.**

STEP 2 ▶ Use your veterinary team



- Your veterinarian and veterinary technician are here to help! They can help guide you in the right direction. Don't be afraid to ask questions, bring up things you've heard or read about diabetes, and ask where you can go for trustworthy information online.
- **Every pet is unique, so it's important to work with your vet to create a unique plan for your pet.**

STEP 3 ▶ Start treatment



- We know it can be overwhelming to have to make decisions about your pet's care when you're feeling anxious and worried about their health—but with diabetes, it's important to start treatment as soon as you and your veterinary team have decided on a plan.
- Almost every pet will need to receive insulin injections.
- Your veterinarian will determine whether your pet's insulin will be administered once or twice a day. Most pets will need to start getting insulin every 12 hours.
- Use and handle the insulin correctly. Your veterinary technician will help you learn how to administer insulin to your pet. Insulin is given under the skin, and most pets tolerate their injections very well.
- Insulin must be refrigerated.
- Most insulin must be rolled gently in your hands before using, but some types require shaking. Read the bottle directions carefully.
- **ALWAYS** use the appropriate syringe—there are different sizes of insulin syringe, and you can over- or under-dose your pet if you use the wrong kind. Your veterinary team will make sure you know what kind of syringe should be used with your pet's insulin.

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- NEVER give insulin if your pet is not eating unless your veterinarian has instructed you to do so. Instead, call your veterinary team to see what you should do. It's better to skip a dose than to give insulin without food.
- Your veterinarian may recommend a diet change for your pet as part of their diabetes management. Make sure to ask questions about timing, amounts, treats, and other things that may seem minor but can affect a diabetic pet's blood sugar management.
- **Don't worry! Your veterinary team will discuss all of this with you, and they will answer questions when you need help along the way.**

STEP 4 ▶ Find what works for your pet



- In many cases, the dose of insulin your veterinarian prescribes at the time of diagnosis will need to be adjusted to get your pet's blood sugar, or blood glucose, under control. To figure out each pet's optimal dose of insulin, both dogs and cats will need to have blood glucose curves done to see what happens to their blood glucose (BG) throughout the day. These serial measurements can be done in three ways:
 - *At the veterinary hospital:* Your pet will stay at the vet clinic for about 12 hours, or a full work day, and the veterinary team will take BG measurements every 2 hours.
 - *At home:* Your veterinary team can teach you how to get tiny blood samples from your pet using a special instrument to measure their BG at home.
 - Using a continuous glucose monitor (CGM) like a Freestyle Libre (also used in people): This is a small sensor that the veterinary team will apply in the hospital, and you can use an app on your smartphone to collect data about your pet's sugar levels. These sensors can stay on for over a week in some cases! They actually measure the glucose under your pet's skin, not in their blood, but it can be a great way to keep an eye on blood sugar levels for pets who don't like to stay in the hospital, pet families who don't like needles, or simply to give a longer period of sugar measurements.
- **BG curves must be done every time your pet's insulin dose is adjusted to make sure they aren't getting too much or too little insulin.**

STEP 5 ▶ Be aware and prepared



- Regular veterinary appointments are important—your pet will need to be seen more frequently now to make sure their treatment plan is working, as diabetes can cause life-threatening medical complications if it's not well-controlled. Always call your vet's office if you are concerned about something new or have questions you didn't think of at your last visit!
- **Always follow your veterinarian's recommendations for follow-up testing and treatment.**



Know what signs mean "emergency." Your veterinary team can provide you with information on what to look for when your pet's glucose gets too high or too low, but always call an open veterinary office if your diabetic pet is suddenly lethargic, vomiting, unresponsive, or refusing food and/or water.

Diabetes can seem overwhelming, but we are here to help!