

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HYPOGLYCEMIA

Hypoglycemia is a syndrome that occurs primarily in toy breeds between 6 and 20 weeks of age. A hypoglycemic attack is often precipitated by stress such as visits to the vet, groomer, over-stimulation, excessive crying, extreme temperatures, etc. The typical signs are listlessness, depression, staggering gait, muscular weakness, and tremors-especially of the face. Puppies with a severe drop in blood sugar develop seizures or become stuporous and go into a coma. Death can follow. This particular sequence of symptoms is not always seen, though. For example, some puppies exhibit only weakness or a wobbly gait. Occasionally a puppy who seemed just fine is found in coma.

Episodes of hypoglycemia often occur without warning-for example, when a puppy is stressed by shipping. Other common causes of acute hypoglycemia are missing a meal, chilling, becoming exhausted from too much play, or having an upset stomach. These events place an added strain on the energy reserves of the liver.

Prolonged or repeated hypoglycemic attacks in toy breed puppies can cause brain damage.

Treatment: The treatment of an acute attack is aimed at restoring the blood sugar. Begin immediately. If the puppy is awake and able to swallow, give corn syrup or sugar water by syringe, or rub corn syrup, honey, or glucose paste on the gums. You should see improvement in 30 minutes. If not, call your veterinarian.

If the pup is unconscious, do not give an oral solution because it will be inhaled. Rub corn syrup, Nutri-Cal, honey, or glucose paste on the gums and proceed at once to your veterinarian. This puppy will require an intravenous dextrose solution and may need to be treated for brain swelling.

Oral glucose paste is sold at pharmacies. If you know your dog is subject to hypoglycemic attacks, keep this product on hand.

Prevention: Susceptible puppies should be fed at least four times a day and ALWAYS before a stress such as a visit to the groomer or vet. It is important to feed a high-carbohydrate, high-protein, high-fat diet. It is essential that the diet be high quality.

Food supplements and table scraps should not exceed 5 to 10 percent of the total daily ration. Owners of toy puppies should take precautions to see that they do not become excessively tired or chilled. Most puppies outgrow this problem.