

Congestive Heart Failure

General Information

Congestive heart failure occurs when the heart does not pump enough blood to meet normal body needs.

Pets with congestive heart failure tire easily, are short of breath and cough deeply due to poor circulation through the lungs. They may actually lose weight, but the abdomen becomes enlarged due to fluid accumulation. The legs may also be swollen and puffy. Often these patients faint or collapse after excitement or exertion, and the tongue appears bluish-gray.

Congestive heart failure can result from heart-valve disease, heartworm infection or heart defects present at birth.

Although congestive heart failure cannot be cured, many patients can live a comfortable life with proper medical management.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Treatment is aimed at removing accumulated fluids, improving the heart's pumping efficiency, and decreasing the heart's workload.
2. Radiographs (x-rays) and electrocardiograms (ECG) are used to diagnose the condition and monitor the response to treatment.
3. *Medication:* Give all medication as directed. Call the doctor if you cannot give the medication.
4. *Diet:* A low-sodium diet is essential in controlling congestive heart failure. Feed your pet as follows:

5. *Activity:* Follow the instructions checked.

_____ Allow normal activity.

_____ Restrict exercise as follows: _____

6. *Special instructions:* _____

Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- Your pet continues to cough.
- Your pet's signs worsen.
- Your pet passes out or has seizures.
- Your pet vomits or has diarrhea.
- Your pet refuses to eat the recommended diet.