

What is Parvovirus? (Parvo)

Canine parvovirus (Parvo) is a highly contagious viral disease that affects all dogs of any age. Parvo most commonly affects puppies that are still too young to be vaccinated, puppies within their vaccination course and unvaccinated adult dogs. The virus is very aggressive and has an extremely high mortality rate if left untreated. It is very often fatal. Parvo attacks the lining of the dogs small intestine, leading to severe vomiting and diarrhoea, often with blood. Dogs will usually become ill or show signs of illness 7-10 days after being infected with Parvo.

What are the symptoms of Parvo?

Not all dogs will show every sign of Parvo, if your dog shows any sign of illness you should contact the vet as soon as possible. Symptoms of Parvo can include:

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea, including bloody diarrhoea
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy and depression

How can my dog become infected with Parvo?

Parvovirus is highly contagious and can survive for long periods in the environment. The virus can withstand routine cleaning and weather changes, which means the spread of the virus is difficult to control. It can be easily transferred on the paws of dogs and on people's shoes or other items contaminated with the virus, like bedding or leashes. Parvovirus is shed in the faeces of infected animals, and dogs easily come into contact with these when sniffing the ground when on walks or at the dog park. It is important to understand that you don't need direct dog-to-dog contact for a dog to become infected with parvovirus.

How do I protect my dog against Parvo?

The only way to prevent your dog from contracting is to ensure they receive all their puppy vaccinations and boosters and you maintain that vaccination coverage for the dogs life. Parvo is an easily preventable disease through vaccination. Contact your local vet to check your dog is up to date with its vaccinations or to schedule a vaccination.

Additional measures to protect your pet include:

- Promptly dispose of faeces on walks to reduce environmental contamination and as part of being a responsible pet owner
- Regularly wash food/water dishes and bedding.
- Don't socialise your dog with known unvaccinated animals
- Follow the vaccination schedule as discussed with your vet
- Don't walk puppies in parks and outside your home until they receive their full complement of puppy vaccines

How is Parvo treated?

Immediate veterinary treatment is required as signs of parvovirus infection progress rapidly, and the disease can be fatal within 48 hours if not treated. Treatment involves hospitalisation over several days, with supportive care including intravenous fluids, antibiotics, pain relief and medications to stop vomiting. In some instances, puppies may require more intense critical care treatment including plasma or blood transfusions. There is no guarantee that treatment will be successful, further highlighting the need to undertake preventative vaccinations.

Can my dog pass Parvo onto my family or other animals?

There is currently no evidence that Parvo can be caught by humans or cats.

For further information contact your local veterinarian