



## Constipation/Colonic Impaction

### Diagnostic Plan

History  
Physical examination  
Rectal palpation  
Abdominal palpation  
Abdominal X-rays  
Blood work  
Urinalysis

### Therapeutic Plan

Intravenous or subcutaneous fluids  
Laxatives  
Motility modifiers  
Enemas  
Manual removal of impacted stool  
Treat primary cause, if possible  
Surgery

### Nutritional Plan

Depending on the pet and the cause. A highly digestible, low fiber, food or a moderate to high fiber food may be helpful. Ensure adequate water intake

## Constipation and Colonic Impaction

Your pet has constipation or colonic impaction. Constipation is the infrequent or difficult passage of dry, hard stools. Colonic impaction is a more severe, chronic form of constipation. Both conditions are usually managed by treating the underlying cause and by using enemas, laxatives and diet. This client education sheet will help you learn more about these conditions and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

### What You Should Know About Constipation and Colonic Impaction

Two major functions of the colon are absorption of water from the stool and storage of the stool until a bowel movement occurs. Constipation results when the stool is retained for too long in the colon, which leads to increased absorption of water, creating a drier, harder stool. Colonic impaction is a progressively more severe, long-standing case of constipation. Passage of a stool may be impossible.

#### Causes

Constipation and colonic impaction are not diseases, but conditions that can be caused by many factors and diseases. Factors such as an insufficient or excessive level of dietary fiber and inadequate water intake can also contribute to constipation. Constipation can also result from ingestion of foreign material such as hair, bones and sand. Environmental factors that affect an animal's daily routine – such as hospitalization, lack of exercise, lack of clean water or a dirty litter box – can lead to constipation.

Other potential causes of constipation and colonic impaction include: anal, rectal, or pelvic pain; tumors of the colon and surrounding structures; prostate gland disorders; matting of hair around the anus; certain drugs; metabolic and endocrine disease; and disorders of the nerves and muscles of the colon.

#### Diagnosis

Your veterinarian will perform a physical examination and will ask you questions about your pet's diet, daily routine including bowel habits and medical history. Rectal examination may help your veterinarian diagnose colonic obstruction

and diseases of the anus, rectum and prostate gland. Blood and urine tests and X-rays may also be done. Endoscopy (an examination of the colon using a small lighted tube inserted through the anus) may be used to exam the colon.

### Treatment and Home Care

The key to managing constipation is to identify and treat the underlying disorder, if one can be found. Surgery may be necessary depending on the cause and severity of the condition.

Your veterinarian may need to hospitalize your pet and administer enemas to relieve severe constipation and colonic impaction. Fluid therapy may be necessary to soften the stool if your pet is dehydrated. Your veterinarian may recommend additional medications for your pet.

Home care consists of giving all prescribed medications and closely monitoring your pet for regular bowel movements. You should also provide access to fresh water and maintain a separate clean litter box for each cat in your household, plus one additional litter box.

Also, groom long-haired pets daily to help remove excess hair that the pet might otherwise ingest. Walking your dog 30 to 60 minutes after it eats will often stimulate a bowel movement. Don't give your pet bones or toys that could possibly be ingested or allow them access to foreign materials.

### Nutritional Plan

If your pet has constipation or colonic impaction your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Your veterinarian may recommend canned foods for increased water intake. Foods rich in fiber (containing at least 10% fiber) may aid in the management of constipation in pets as it does in people. Fiber increases water retention in the intestine, which softens the stool, making it easier to pass. Increased fecal bulk, created by the fiber itself and the water absorbed by the fiber, stimulates the reflex to have a bowel movement and shortens the time it takes for the stool to pass through the intestine. Fiber-rich foods which may aid in the treatment of constipation and colonic impaction include Hill's® Prescription Diet® r/d® Canine and r/d® Feline Weight Loss-Low Calorie and Prescription Diet® w/d® Canine and w/d® Feline Low Fat-Diabetic-Gastrointestinal. Some pets may have better response to a highly digestible, low-fiber food that decreases the amount of stool in the colon such as Prescription Diet® i/d® Canine and i/d® Feline Gastrointestinal Health.

If the suspected cause is a food allergy, your veterinarian may recommend a food composed of ingredients that your pet is unlikely to have eaten such as Prescription Diet® d/d® Canine and d/d® Feline Skin Support. Alternately, your veterinarian may recommend a food made of hydrolyzed proteins, which minimize allergic reactions to food, such as Hill's® Prescription Diet® z/d® Canine and z/d® Feline Low Allergen.

### Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

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## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.