

# Distemper

Austin Animal Center has seen a rise in distemper cases coming into the shelter. The dog you are adopting has not shown symptoms so far, but please be aware.

Canine Distemper virus (CDV) falls under the umbrella of contagious diseases known as Canine Infectious Respiratory Disease Complex (CIRDC), often called “Kennel Cough”. Primarily spread through respiratory secretions, the virus can attack multiple parts of the body including the gastrointestinal tract and central nervous system. CDV mainly affects dogs, ferrets, and raccoons, and cannot be spread to cats or people.

The good news is that the distemper vaccine is very effective at preventing this virus, and many dogs with mild to moderate cases of distemper can make a full recovery with supportive care.

## Common Symptoms

- Cough/chest congestion, snotty nose/nasal discharge, nasal congestion, pneumonia
- Not eating/loss of interest in food, vomiting
- Extreme lethargy or fatigue
- Diarrhea (sometimes bloody)
- Eye discharge/decreased tear production/squinting/crust around the eyes
- Fever
- Neurologic signs such as seizures or twitching

## Diagnosis

Diagnosis of CDV is based on symptoms and confirmed with PCR testing. The list of possible symptoms for CDV is long because it can attack multiple parts of the body, even at the same time. It is often difficult to predict how symptoms will present, but once the dog starts to show recovery, symptoms usually continue to disappear rather than get worse again

## Treatment

CDV is a virus which has no cure. Instead, we do everything we can to treat the symptoms until the virus passes. Austin Animal Center works with our partners at Austin Pets Alive! to ensure every dog who contracts the virus has the best possible chance to fight it.



## Prevention

The distemper vaccine comes in many forms (DHPP/DAPP/DHLPP) and is considered very effective. The vaccine usually provides partial immunity immediately, and full immunity in 3 days. As long as your resident dog(s) are healthy adults (over 2 years old) and have received multiple distemper vaccines, including a recent one within the past 3 years, they should have adequate protection against CDV. If you take home a dog who is CDV exposed, or has CDV, your personal dog(s) and any dog(s) that may come in contact (even through a fence) must be fully-vaccinated adults.

A fully-vaccinated dog is a one who has received at least 2 DHPP, DHLPP or DAPP vaccines, one of which was given within the last 3 years and at the age of 4 months or older.

For dogs that are distemper-exposed, or have distemper, it is important that you follow these precautions:

- Do not let the dog interact with any other dogs that you are not 100% sure are fully vaccinated.
- Do not let them sniff other dogs through a fence, or share water bowls with other dogs.
- Do not leave water or food bowls outside where they can be accessed by wildlife or other dogs

Dogs usually shed the virus in bodily secretions for 1-2 weeks after acute illness. Dogs with neurologic signs can shed virus for longer periods of time. Extended quarantine may be necessary.