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## Vomiting in Pets

Vomiting is one of the most common reasons pets are taken to their veterinarian. Vomiting is defined as an active expulsion of stomach and intestinal contents, and is differentiated from regurgitation, which is a passive process characterized by lack of abdominal push. Although most of us think that vomiting is a sign of stomach problems, vomiting can be associated with disease in almost any body system, including the central nervous system, kidneys, pancreas, and liver. A detailed history provided by the pet owner regarding duration of vomiting and character of the vomitus, coupled with age and species, are the cornerstones of diagnosis.

In general, we classify vomiting in the broad categories of acute (sudden onset) and chronic (long term). This helps us narrow down the possible causes and guides further diagnostic tests. Many times, the cause of vomiting is obvious (e.g., the puppy who has swallowed a toy or an old cat with kidney disease). Occasionally, your veterinarian must play the role of detective to find the more obscure or hidden reasons for the vomiting. A minimum data base-consisting of white and red blood cell count, complete biochemical profile and urinalysis-are crucial pieces of information gathered on almost every vomiting animal to aid in the diagnosis process. Additional testing often includes x-rays of the abdomen, ultrasound of the abdomen, and additional blood tests.

If these tests do not yield a definitive diagnosis, more extensive work-up is required. Endoscopy, laparoscopy, and surgical exploration may be necessary to establish a diagnosis, and consultation with experts in a variety of specialties assists in guiding further diagnostic tests and establishing treatment protocols.