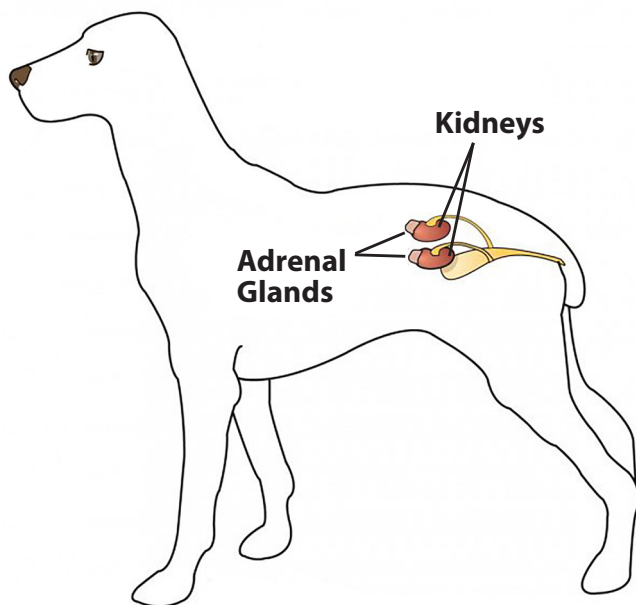


Veterinary Centre

Addison's Disease (Hypoadrenocorticism)

What is Addison's Disease?

Addison's disease is a fairly common hormonal disease that affects mainly dogs. It involves failure of the adrenal glands, small hormone-secreting glands located near the kidneys. It is not known exactly why the adrenal glands stop functioning, but it is possible that they are destroyed by the immune system. The hormones that the adrenal glands normally secrete are steroids (also called glucocorticoids) and aldosterone (also called a mineralocorticoid). These hormones are essential for life. Therefore, if Addison's disease is not treated, it can be fatal. However, the good news is that it can be treated, by simply giving your dog the hormones that the adrenal glands should normally be making.



How would I know my Dog had Addison's Disease?

Classic chronic clinical signs are gradual loss of appetite, weight loss, perhaps some vomiting or diarrhoea, and maybe some degree of lethargy. These signs can be mild and chronic or acute, and not all of these signs must be present to confirm a diagnosis. Sometimes the initial clinical signs are not noticeable, and the dog develops a clinical crisis, which involves hospitalization and intravenous fluid care, as well as hormone supplementation.

How is Addison's Disease Diagnosed?

Addison's disease is diagnosed based on clinical signs and some testing, which will depend on your dog's specific clinical signs. Ultimately, an adrenocorticotrophic hormone (ACTH) stimulation test, which is a 1-hour blood test, must be performed to confirm a diagnosis. Other tests will likely be performed, to make sure this is the only problem that your dog has.



How is Addison's Disease Treated?

Treatment for Addison's is lifelong.

Once a diagnosis of hypoadrenocorticism has been made, most dogs can be successfully treated very successfully with oral medication. Your dog's diet and activity levels can often remain unchanged. The majority of dogs resume normal lives, even after an Addisonian crisis.

It will be necessary to monitor progress carefully, particularly at the start of treatment. This may involve occasional hospitalisation for monitoring and follow-up testing.

Long-term treatment involves supplementing the hormones that would otherwise be produced by the adrenal glands.

The glucocorticoid is replaced by **prednisone** while the mineralocorticoid either in tablet form, fludrocortisone (**Florinef™**) or via injection of desoxycorticosterone pivalate (**Zycortal™**).

Prednisone is given orally, on a once daily basis, and the dose of this medication will also be adjusted as time goes by.

In addition to prednisone, the mineralocorticoid hormone can be replaced either by twice daily tablets (some patients may be reduced to once daily in time) or an injection. The injection is initially given every 25 days but in many patients this can be extended out after appropriate testing. The costs of the injection are higher initially but likely lower overall.

We will be happy to discuss both options and the costs associated with each.

Now that my Dog has been diagnosed with Addison's Disease, is there anything that I should be watching out for?

Yes! Please let us know if you notice decreased appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea, weight loss, or lethargy. These signs may suggest that an increase in prednisone is warranted. Please also notify us if you notice increased drinking, increased appetite, or panting. These signs may suggest that the dose of prednisone has to be decreased. Please be mindful of any stressful situations that may arise, and check with us if there is a need to increase the dose of prednisone for a day or two during such events. Please avoid deviating in any way from the treatment protocol, without discussing this first with one of the Veterinary Centre veterinarians. Finally, be sure never to run out of prednisone, because abrupt discontinuation of this drug can be life-threatening.

Will my Dog be OK?

Yes! Close and constant communication with us at the Veterinary Centre, careful adherence to the treatment protocol, and regular check-ups will help your dog have a happy and long life, with successfully treated Addison's disease.

