



NORTHPARK Animal Hospital

STROKE

Do dogs have strokes?

Strokes or cerebral vascular accidents (CVA) are rare in dogs. A stroke is a sudden interruption in blood supply to any part of the brain.

What causes a stroke?

Anything that can block an artery supplying the brain can cause a stroke. Some common causes include a blood clot (thrombus or embolus) in the vessel that lodges in a cerebral blood vessel. This is also known as an embolism. Cerebral bleeding from trauma or as a result of *thrombocytopenia* (see separate topic) can also cause strokes. Most strokes are of unknown cause.

At what age are dogs most at risk?

Most strokes occur in dogs over 3 years old, but young dogs may also be victims.

What are the signs?

Signs of a stroke are variable depending on the region or regions of the brain affected, and the degree and duration of blood and oxygen deprivation. There may be sudden collapse or simply disorientation. A calm, relaxed dog may become vicious and vice versa. There may be loss of bladder and bowel habits, and loss of owner recognition. Any abrupt change in a dog's behavior is reason to have it examined by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

How is a stroke diagnosed?

Because many other conditions can have some of the same clinical signs, diagnosing a stroke may be a case of ruling out other possibilities. This often requires extensive tests.

What is the treatment?

Treatment is quite complex and there is no guarantee of complete success.

What is the prognosis?

Some dogs will recover most of their motor functions (movement, etc.) but the behavioral changes may be more difficult to correct. Your veterinarian will help you assess progress and plan remedial action.

