

# Bloat in Greyhounds

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**What is "Bloat" – this is a term commonly used to describe gastric dilation and volvulus (GDV).**

Bloat is a very serious health risk for many dogs, yet many dog owners know very little about it. It is frequently seen in deep-chested dogs and has been reported in greyhounds. The incidence of GDV or Bloat in greyhounds is such that it is important to be aware of the symptoms and the factors that can predispose the condition in order to manage your greyhound and minimize the risk.

The first and most important fact is that **Bloat can kill in less than an hour**; therefore any concern with your greyhound with regards to the presenting clinical signs seeking veterinary care is critical as **time is of the essence**.

The technical name for bloat is "Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus" ("GDV") and has two parts to the condition:

1. **Gastric Dilation** - dilation of the stomach is often related to swallowed air (although food and fluid can also be present). It usually happens when there's an abnormal accumulation of air, fluid, and/or foam in the stomach. Dilation can occur with or without "volvulus" (twisting).
2. **Volvulus or Torsion** - As the stomach swells, it may rotate 90° to 360°, twisting between its fixed attachments at the oesophagus and at the duodenum (the first section of the small intestine). The twisting stomach traps air, food, and water in the stomach, resulting in obstruction of veins in the abdomen, leading to low blood pressure, shock, and damage to internal organs. The combined effect can quickly kill a dog.



Photo credited to Dr J. Vidt <http://www.drjwv.com/article.php?view=0014.php&name=Bloat>

## Symptoms

Typical symptoms often include some or all of the following:

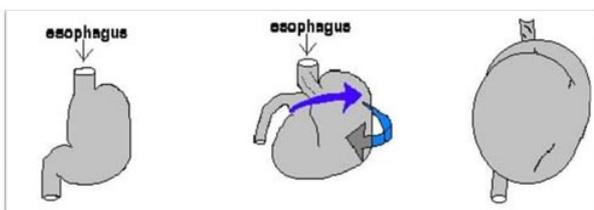
### Primary or Cardinal Symptoms

- a. Attempts to vomit, usually unsuccessful, and is often referred to as the "*Hallmark Symptom*". Can be reported as sounding like a repetitive cough.
- b. Your greyhound is not acting like him/her usual self. This is usually the earliest sign and can sometimes be the only the sign.
- c. Significant anxiety and restlessness. May refuse to lie down or even sit down.
- d. "Hunched up" or appear arched in the back.
- e. Lack of normal gurgling and digestive sounds in the abdomen.
- f. Bloated abdomen that may feel tight (like a drum).

### Secondary symptoms

*(These become apparent as the condition progresses)*

- a. Pale or off-color gums commonly cold to touch – dark red in early stages while in the later stages very pale to white.
- b. Coughing and unproductive gagging.
- c. Heavy salivating or drooling.
- d. Foamy mucous around the lips, or vomiting foamy mucous.
- e. Unproductive attempts to defecate.
- f. Looking at their side or other evidence of abdominal pain or discomfort.
- g. Drinking excessively.
- h. Heavy or rapid panting with shallow breathing.
- i. Apparent weakness; unable to stand or has a spread-legged stance, especially in the advance stages.
- j. Shallow breathing, accelerated heartbeat, weak pulse leading through to collapse.



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## Treatment

Stabilization and surgery are best when performed early in the course of the disease and mortality rates increase with the severity of disease. If your greyhound has exhibited any of the above clinical signs, they should be evaluated by a veterinarian immediately. – do not waste time waiting to see if the symptoms stop or attempt home remedies (as some sites suggest online); the best and only real option is to seek veterinary advice early to increase the chances of survival.

## Causes and Prevention

### Cause

- a. Stress – Mating, whelping, boarding, change in routine, new dog/s or people in household, etc.
- b. Eating habits - especially rapid eating, drinking water to quickly which can cause gulping of air, eating gas-producing foods (especially soybean products, legumes & brewer's yeast), high fat meals and elevated food bowls



- c. Exercise - before and *especially* after eating.
- d. Build & Physical Characteristics – usually larger breeds with deep-chests with a higher incidence if they are underweight.
- e. Disposition – Fearful or anxious temperament, prone to stress or history of aggression towards other dogs or people.
- f. Heredity - *Especially* having a first-degree relative who has bloated or underlying conditions affecting digestion (i.e. Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency – EPI) as gas is associated with incomplete digestion.

### Preventative measures

- Avoid highly stressful situations. If you can't avoid them, try to minimize the stress as much as possible.
- Do not use an elevated food bowl.
- Do not permit rapid eating.
- Feed 2 or 3 meals daily, instead of just one.
- When switching dog food, do so gradually (allow several weeks)
- Allow access to fresh water at all times but manage the amount of water-intake one hour before or after a meal.
- Do not exercise for at least an hour (longer if possible) before and especially after eating.
- *Particularly avoid vigorous exercise*
- Ensuring the diet is balanced and high quality with a protein content of >30% (particularly raw meat) that is low in fat.
- Avoid feeding dry foods exclusively.
- Being aware of their character traits and managing the environment to minimize risk factors.
- If there is any concerns with regard to the condition or weight of your greyhound and if all other factors are normal but their weight or body condition remains poor; assessment by a vet to establish or rule out any underlying conditions such as EPI. Therefore if there is an underlying cause working with your vet is the best way forward for minimizing risk.

While reviewing articles and information on the internet related to this condition I noted that there were numerous sites offering reasonable information. Unfortunately also a number of sites presented information that was confusing and contradicting but worse of all they offered home-based treatment options. In no circumstances should you ever attempt home remedies with regard to bloat or GDV – it wastes time and can cause complications or the death of your greyhound. Bloat is an “**emergency**” and should be treated as such and not left to wait and see or attempt first aid at home.

To summarize Bloat or Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus" ("GDV") has a rapid onset with a short window of time to seek veterinary advice and treatment. Once one or more of the above symptoms are present or if you have any concerns with your greyhound it is important that you seek veterinary advice *ASAP* as Bloat can kill within an hour.