

ASK OUR VET, DR. SCHMIDT



What is IVDD?

If your dog suddenly starts dragging his hind legs one of the causes could be intervertebral disc disease (IVDD). This is a problem that most commonly occurs in short stubby legged dogs (chondrodystrophied) such as Dachshunds, Welsh corgis and Beagles. The intervertebral discs are found between the backbones to act as shock absorbers. Their makeup is similar to a jelly donut, a thicker outer shell with a soft jelly center.

IVDD is a genetic disease in which the changes are generally not able to be prevented. The specific type is Type 1 disc disease where the jelly portion starts mineralizing into a toothpaste consistency. As this process progresses the disc material suddenly rockets out into the spinal canal putting pressure on the spinal cord and nerves. This is most commonly at the thoracolumbar spine where the ribs end. This is different from people where the jelly portion undergoes a fibrous, scar tissue-like change (Type 2 disc disease) that causes the disc to gradually bulge into the spinal canal. In dogs, as the compression continues neurologic function is compromised causing ataxia (drunken walking), weakness in the hind legs and

eventually irreversible paralysis. This is an emergency situation and if you notice ataxia, stumbling and weakness in the hind legs you should visit your veterinarian immediately. The return to normal function is possible if caught early enough. Depending on the severity of your dog's signs, medications can be used to fix the problem, however, surgery is needed if the neurologic dysfunction is severe enough.



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