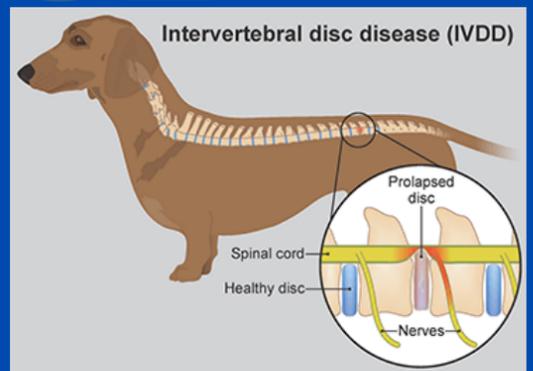


# INTERVERTEBRAL DISC DISEASE (IVDD)



Intervertebral disc disease or disc herniation is a common cause of back pain and difficulty walking in dogs and occasionally cats. IVDD is a common problem affecting many different breeds of dogs. The most commonly affected dogs are Dachshunds, but many other dogs with "long backs" can also be affected such as Basset Hounds, Beagles, Bulldogs, Pugs, Shih Tzus, Pekingese, Welsh Corgis, German Shepherds, Doberman Pinschers are just a few.

Intervertebral discs act as shock absorbers between the back bones within the vertebral column and permit mobility of the column. These discs are like a jelly donut in composition—thick outer capsule with a jelly like inside. There are two main types of disc disease, Type 1 and Type 2.

## Type 1

The inside of the disc becomes calcified and thickened into a toothpaste-like consistency. This is the type most commonly seen in Dachshunds. The thickened center will rupture through the outer capsule of the disk causing compression and swelling of the spinal cord. Depending on the severity of the disc herniation your pet may experience pain in the neck or back, difficulty walking (weakness), ataxia (walking as if they are drunk), inability to walk (paralysis), and/or loose feeling or sensation of the limbs. Type 1 disc disease occurs very quickly and the pet typically goes from absolutely normal to crying in pain and having difficulty walking.

## Type 2

This is similar to disk disease in humans. It is most often seen in older, large breed dogs. The jelly center undergoes a scar tissue like change, which causes the disc to bulge and compress the spinal cord. Type 2 disc disease has a more gradual onset.

Clinical signs will be similar to Type 1.

About 75% of disc herniations will occur within the back while about 25% will occur within the neck. Disc herniations within the back will mostly affect the hind legs while herniations within the neck will likely affect all four legs.

To diagnose IVDD, radiographs are initially taken. Many times changes can be seen to make a diagnosis, but a normal radiograph does not mean there is not a problem. An MRI or CT with contrast is the tests most often used to definitively diagnose the problem and determine which disc(s) is affected. Other possible diseases that can cause similar signs include: FCE (fibrocartilagenous emboli), spinal tumor, vertebral fracture or luxation, or possibly an infection within the spinal cord or covering of the spinal cord.

## Treatment Options

### Conservative therapy

Indications: Only mildly affected (painful, ataxia, mild weakness).

Less ideal times: Paralysis, rapidly worsening clinical signs.

The Plan: STRICT cage rest for 6 weeks, Anti-inflammatories with either prednisone/NSAID, Pain medication (Tramadol or Gabapentin), + / - Muscle relaxers (methocarbamol), + / - Acupuncture, + / - Physical therapy

### Surgical treatment

Indications: Paralyzed, rapidly worsening clinical signs, severe pain

This surgery needs to be performed by a veterinary surgeon or neurologist. We will provide you with referral information.

Will manage with medications similar as to above until surgery is performed.

STRICT cage rest for 6-8 weeks.

Prognosis in most cases is good for pets that have not lost sensation or the ability to move their legs. The prognosis is poor for patients that have lost sensation.

If you notice any of the above listed clinical signs, please call your veterinarian as soon as possible. Time is critical for a good outcome.

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