

DIABETES- A DISEASE OF DOGS AND CATS

I know that many of you reading this article have Type II diabetes. Did you realize that your beloved dog or cat could also develop this condition? This is sad but true. Diabetes mellitus is a disorder of carbohydrate, fat, and protein metabolism caused by an absolute or relative insulin deficiency. The disease can affect dogs and cats usually middle to older aged. It is more common in female dogs, in male cats, and in overweight pets. Common symptoms are drinking more water, urinating more, weight loss, and increased appetite. As the disease worsens, lethargy, inappetence, and vomiting are more common. The disease can be controlled with diet and insulin injections.

There are certain types of human insulins that can be used on dogs and cats. There is a veterinary insulin that has been specifically developed for cats. Dogs and cats do not mind the injections. The needle is tiny and sharp and dogs' and cats' skin is looser than ours. It has been my experience that any owner can learn how to administer the insulin injections. Most pets require twice daily insulin injections. A small percentage of cats can be transient diabetics and their glucose levels can normalize and then they would no longer require insulin injections.

Diet is a big part of the treatment. A low fat, high fiber diet is recommended for dogs and ideally, a high protein, canned diet is best for cats.

Regular visits for blood glucose checks, examinations, and sometimes other lab work is necessary for diabetic patients. These pets can be more prone to certain types of infections, for example, urinary tract and gum disease. Even with insulin therapy, about 80% of diabetic dogs will develop cataracts which can lead to blindness. Many of these dogs can benefit from cataract surgery. Cats can develop a diabetic neuropathy that can cause them to walk abnormally on their hind legs with their ankles almost touching the ground.

With you and your veterinarian's help, your pet's diabetes can be controlled and your pet can have a good quality of life and be a happy member of your family again.

Karen Miller, DVM

Owner and Veterinarian of Lincolnnton Animal Hospital