

# Canine Parvovirus- What you need to know

**What is Parvo:** A highly infectious, very hardy virus that causes an infectious gastrointestinal illness in puppies and dogs, and without treatment, is potentially deadly. Once a dog contracts Parvo, the virus replicates in the intestines. This leads to several GI issues and can lead to myocarditis (inflammation of the heart).

**Resiliency:** Parvo can survive indoors at room temperature for 2 months or more. Parvo can survive outdoors for several months in direct sunlight and years if the area is not regularly exposed to direct sunlight. Freezing is completely protective to the virus. If the outdoors is contaminated and is frozen, you must wait for it to thaw out and warm up before you can safely introduce a new dog. The only chemical proven to completely kill Parvo is bleach.

**How it is spread:** Through direct contact with an infected dog or through feces. Dogs can begin shedding the virus 4-5 days after exposure, before the dog begins to exhibit symptoms. 7-10 days after exposure the dog sheds enormous amounts of the virus in its stool. The dog will continue to shed the virus while (s)he is sick and for up to 10 days AFTER recovery. Due to the rate of shedding described above, there is a HUGE potential for environmental contamination when an infected dog has been there. Shoes that have come into contact with the virus can also bring the virus into a dog's environment

- Parvo can be picked up anywhere, although, it is easier to pick up an infection in an area where an infected dog has been due to the large amounts of virus in a contaminated area.
  - o Probability of infection depends on the number of viral particles a dog is exposed to, what kind of immune experience the dog has previously had with the virus, and how strong the individual dog is. A vaccinated dog's risk is greatly reduced.
- Breeds that are at greater risk of Parvo include: German Shepherd Dogs, Rottweilers, Doberman Pinschers, English Springer Spaniels, and American Staffordshire Terriers.

**Symptoms:** Severe, bloody diarrhea, lethargy, anorexia, fever, vomiting, weight loss, weakness, depression, dehydration

- If your dog is experiencing any or all of these symptoms, contact your veterinarian immediately!

**Treatment:** Treatment costs for a single dog that has been diagnosed with Parvo can run several thousands of dollars. Parvo reduces your dog's ability to fight infections by lowering

their white blood cell count. The dog is typically hospitalized in an isolation ward where (s)he will be monitored for secondary infections and supportive care will be administered. Antibiotics may be administered to prevent bacterial infections from entering your dog through the damaged walls of their intestines.

**Prevention:** Understanding Parvo is the first step toward preventing the spread of this dangerous virus. Ensure your puppy is vaccinated at the appropriate ages. The initial round of vaccines is given in a series of 3 at the following ages: first vaccine between 6-8 weeks of age, second vaccine between 10-12 weeks of age, and third vaccine between 14-16 weeks of age. A booster shot is given every 3 years after that.