

# Gunner's Dog House

## Dog Digestive System Obstructions

**The symptoms for an obstruction in your dogs' upper digestive system are likely to be:**

1. Repeated retching to try and clear the object or blockage from their upper digestive tubes.
2. Drooling and lots of visible saliva due to the dog not being able to swallow the normal amount of saliva.
3. Unable to swallow food resulting in vomiting.

**Symptoms for obstruction in the lower digestive system including the stomach and intestines may be:**

1. Larger objects will not be able to move further than the stomach causing infrequent bouts of vomiting that may not occur for up to 2 days at a time.
2. Smaller objects that move further than the stomach may cause very frequent and almost constant vomiting and retching to try and clear the object with no sign of diarrhea.
3. Loss of appetite and not wanting to eat or drink anything because all movement of the dogs waste is restricted or stopped completely.
4. Dog may try strenuous attempts at passing feces.

### What Causes Obstructions in the Digestive System?

As the name might suggest, an obstruction in the digestive system is caused by an object blocking the continuous flow of food and waste through the dogs' body. This object or foreign body (indigestible object) will cause your dogs' defensive system to try and flush the blockage out via vomiting or via diarrhea.

These foreign bodies can be anything from a stone your dog has eaten on a walk to a piece of their favourite toy they have chewed off and swallowed by accident. It's not uncommon for this to happen to your dog as you might expect.

If the object your dog has swallowed is large enough and cannot pass through the stomach it will cause the foreign body to float around in the stomach and occasionally trying to pass through to the intestines. This then temporarily blocks the flow for other foods, causing your dog to vomit and dislodge the object where the cycle restarts.

In the case of a smaller object or the object passing through into the small intestines it will cause great discomfort for your dog as the waste is fully stopped in its travels and accumulates behind where it cannot travel any further. In this situation your dog will be in great discomfort and try to dislodge all waste by vomiting and via diarrhea (if obstruction is in small intestine) or by straining to pass feces with no vomiting (if obstruction is in large intestine).

### What Your Vet May Say or Do

1. Feel intestines for signs of a foreign object.
2. If the vet suspects a problem in the digestive system that is out of reach (stomach, start of small intestines) they will probably suggest an x-ray.
3. Some objects may not show up on x-rays so barium liquid (which will show up on x-rays) will be swallowed by the dog and then frequent x-rays will be taken to view the flow through the digestive system.
4. Other methods for looking for foreign bodies include using ultrasound or an endoscope which is a small camera passed into the stomach to look around for abnormalities.
5. In the event of an object being stuck in the digestive system, surgical operation may be needed to remove the offending item to prevent death by toxic shock.



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