

Dog Stomach Trouble: The Emergency Card

Most vomiting and diarrhea can wait for a normal appointment. This short list cannot. Stick it on the fridge and read it once before you ever need it - the bloat picture is the one where minutes genuinely matter.

GO NOW - do not wait for morning

1. **Retching that produces nothing, with a swelling or tight belly.** This is the bloat picture. Do not massage it, do not wait to see, do not try home remedies. Drive.
2. **Collapse, pale or white gums, cold weakness.**
3. **Significant blood** - real blood or coffee-ground material in vomit; stool that is black and tarry, or pouring red.
4. **The known bad swallow** - medications, xylitol, chocolate, grapes or raisins, rodent bait, antifreeze, toys, corn cobs, cooked bones, string.
5. **Repeated vomiting.** A second vomit in the same day means call; episodes stacking over a few hours, or a dog who cannot keep water down, mean go.
6. **A painful, hunched, guarded belly** - front down and rear up is a classic pain posture.
7. **Puppies, toy breeds, pregnant dogs, diabetics and seniors** with any of the above. Their monitor-at-home window rounds to zero.

The gum check, in ten seconds - read an unpigmented patch

Pink and moist

Normal. Color returns in about 2 seconds after a gentle press.

Pale or white

Go now. Can mean anemia or poor circulation.

Gray or blue

Go now. Can mean not enough oxygen.

Brick red or muddy

Go now. Can accompany shock or serious infection.

Same day, but not a siren

- Diarrhea past 48 hours
- A second vomit in one day, even in a bright dog
- Either symptom in a dog going quiet or picky
- Vomiting and diarrhea together, without the NOW signs
- Regurgitation happening repeatedly
- A first stress-colitis episode
- Weight loss riding along with any of it

Safe to watch at home

- Only a single vomit, or mild diarrhea
- In an otherwise-healthy **adult** dog
- No suspected swallow or toxin, no belly pain or swelling
- Still eating, drinking and acting fully normal
- Re-checked every few hours - never past 48
- Sooner the moment anything recurs or worsens

Three checks that keep you honest: gums (pink and moist, refilling in about two seconds) · water (still drinking, keeping it down) · behavior (would a stranger call this dog well?). Re-run them every few hours. They are reassurance, not immunity - they never override anything on the NOW list.

The one to memorize: unproductive retching plus a swelling belly in any dog - especially a large, deep-chested one - is bloat until proven otherwise. It is a drive-now, call-on-the-way emergency where the clock runs in minutes to a few hours. It is the single stomach presentation where waiting to see costs lives. And a quiet belly proves nothing: judge by the belly and the dog, never by the sound.

My vet: _____ Emergency clinic: _____ Poison line: _____

Fill this in now, while nothing is wrong - it is what the clinic asks first

His weight

they size everything by it

Everything he takes

medications and supplements

Ongoing conditions

and his age

On the day - when it started

and how many times since

What came up, or came out

color, blood, anything in it

Anything he could have eaten

food, plant, object, trash, medication