

Bloat Post-Surgery Care and Common Complications

Some dogs may continue to have poor circulation and therefore shock despite receiving large amounts of intra-venous fluids. Some dogs may become anemic or hypoproteinemic (abnormally low protein in the blood), and may require blood transfusion or plasma administration. These dogs should be reevaluated frequently by the veterinarian. **Cardiac arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat) is common following an acute episode of GDV. The veterinarian should perform frequent EKGs to monitor the heartbeat during the first week. In fact, continuous EKG monitoring for 48 to 72 hours is required in acute cases. Anti-arrhythmic drugs may be necessary to treat this condition.** Gastric necrosis (cell death) and perforation can occur up to a week after surgery, especially if resection (surgical removal of part or all of a diseased organ) was performed. The veterinarian must monitor the stomach fluids closely both during surgery and during the first 5 days after surgery:

1. A pale green to gray fluid indicates arterial (blood vessel) damage caused by ischemic (insufficient blood supply to an organ) or necrotic (dead cells) regions which will require resectioning (surgical removal of part of the organ).
2. A black or blue/black fluid suggests venous occlusion (blockage in the veins that carry blood back to the heart) and intramural hemorrhage (internal bleeding within the organ). Some of these lesions are not reversible.
3. Areas with compromised blood supply but do not require resection are dark red.
4. Researchers also recommend that color be reevaluated 10 to 15 minutes after repositioning and decompression of the stomach, before completing the surgery.

If gastric necrosis and perforation occurs, euthanasia should be seriously considered. Food and water is typically withheld for the first 48 to 72 hours after gastropexy (bloat surgery), then multiple small meals are fed. Once the dog returns home, he/she should be fed smaller-than-usual portions of bland food frequently (3 times daily), and should not be exercised within 2 hours after meals. Veterinary attention should be sought immediately if there are signs of recurrence.