

Depending on various factors, the prognosis for dogs with DCM can range from several months to a few years. Therefore, it is crucial to work closely with a veterinarian experienced in cardiology to monitor the dog's condition, adjust treatment as needed, and provide the best possible care.

## Common medications prescribed in patients with DCM

### ACE INHIBITORS

work to expand the veins leaving the heart and reduce resistance so that it is easier for the heart to pump blood back out to the body.

### DIURETICS

help to remove fluid from the lungs to make breathing easier for dogs with congestive heart disease.

### DRUGS TO MODIFY FORCE OF HEART'S CONTRACTIONS

help to increase the strength of heart muscle contractions and lower the pressure in the arteries and veins.

### BETA BLOCKERS

act as anti-arrhythmic drugs and prescribed if irregular heart rhythms are diagnosed. These drugs work by acting on the heart's electrical channels.

### NUTRITIONAL THERAPY

may be needed in the management of heart disease to maintain physical functions and prevent complications

### BRONCHODILATORS

may be prescribed to make breathing easier and reduce cough frequency associated with congestive heart failure.

## What can I do to help?

Your vet will do everything possible. You can also team up to help!

- **Create a comfortable environment for your dog.** This includes providing a cozy and warm bed, keeping the room quiet, and keeping your dog's favorite toys and blankets within reach.
- **Help your dog to relax** by giving them massages, gentle belly rubs, and cuddles.
- **Provide a healthy diet** that is low in sodium and high in nutrients. A balanced diet can help manage the symptoms of heart failure.
- **Ensure your dog gets the appropriate amount of exercise** as your vet recommends. Light exercises, like gentle walks, can help maintain muscle strength and prevent further heart-related complications.
- **Monitor your dog's condition regularly** and seek medical attention immediately if you notice any concerning symptoms.

### Scan for taking the CHF Symptom Checker Test



This material is for informational purposes only. It does not replace the advice of a veterinarian. Talk to your vet, and visit [www.savavet.com](http://www.savavet.com) for more information.



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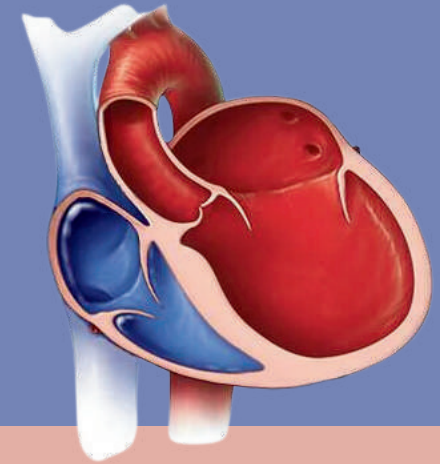
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# Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)



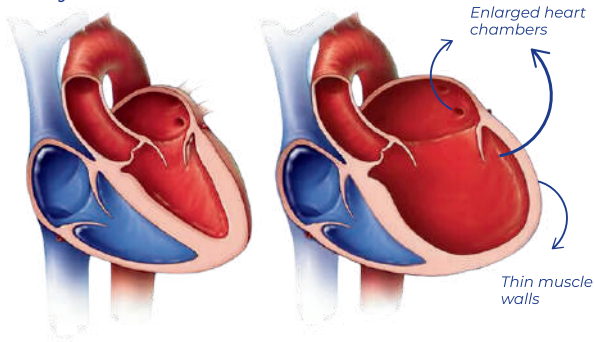
DCM is a common cause of congestive heart failure and is a disease of the cardiac muscle resulting in the dilation of the ventricles (the bottom chambers of the heart) along with thinning of the walls lining the ventricles. When this happens, the heart doesn't pump strongly enough to meet the body's needs. Usually, the disease progresses slowly and can go unnoticed. It is seen more in large breed dogs, DCM can significantly impact the quality of life of the affect pet.

## What is Dilated cardiomyopathy?

Dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) is one of the **most common heart diseases in large-breed dogs**. With DCM, the dog's heart becomes enlarged as the heart muscle weakens—becoming thinner and stretched out.

In dogs that have DCM, the ventricles start to wear down and become thin and weak. This makes it more difficult for them to pump blood containing oxygen out of the heart to the body.

Healthy normal heart vs heart with DCM



## What are the causes of DCM?

Though the actual cause of DCM is a matter of debate, nutritional, infectious, and genetic predisposition are considered as important factors for the development of DCM.

## What are the breeds predisposed to DCM?

Usually large breeds; Doberman Pinscher, the Great Dane, the Boxer, and the Cocker Spaniel are the most common breeds are predisposed to develop DCM.

## Symptoms of DCM

The clinical signs of DCM occur secondary to either decreased delivery of oxygen-rich blood to the body (lethargy, weakness, weight loss, collapse), or to congestion of blood in the lungs (coughing, increased respiratory rate and/or effort, abdominal distention) or both.

## How is DCM diagnosed?

A veterinarian will diagnose dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM) in dogs using a combination of tests, including:

- **Physical exam:** Listening to your dog's heart and lungs for a murmur, arrhythmia, or odd sounds.
- **Blood and urine tests:** Tests that can indicate liver and kidney function, which are often affected by heart disease. They can also check for cardiac biomarkers, which indicate heart disease.
- **Chest X-rays:** Images that can show the size and shape of the heart, and if there's fluid in the lungs.
- **Electrocardiogram (ECG):** Tests that measure the heart's electrical activity to determine the heart rate and any abnormal rhythms.
- **Ultrasound examination (echocardiogram):** Procedure that creates a 3D image of the heart to show the size of each chamber, the thickness of the heart walls and valves, and how well the heart pumps.

## How is DCM treated?

DCM is managed rather than treated with medications that help to decrease the workload of the heart or improve the efficiency of the heart's work, and to remove any fluid from the lungs to make breathing easier. Management of DCM is lifelong in dogs.

The specific treatment is tailored to the individual patient. Oral medications are most commonly used and many are the same as those used for people with heart disease. Therapy improves the heart's ability to pump and controls the signs of congestive heart failure. Treatment extends the life of the patient while allowing the pet excellent quality of life. Some patients also need medications to improve their heart rhythm. These medications are crucial to minimize the risk of arrhythmias and sudden death.

## What is the prognosis for pets with DCM?

It can vary depending on several factors, including the underlying cause of the disease, the stage at which it is diagnosed, the response to treatment, and the individual dog's overall health.

In some cases, with early detection and appropriate management, dogs with DCM can experience an improved quality of life and have a more favorable prognosis. However, it is essential to note that DCM is a progressive and often irreversible condition. In many cases, the disease will continue to progress over time, despite treatment. As DCM progresses, the heart's ability to pump blood effectively becomes more compromised, leading to congestive heart failure and other complications.