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Meningitis in dogs is a disorder caused when the meninges, or membranes which cover the central nervous system, become inflamed. While there are many types of meningitis that can affect dogs, including viral, protozoan, bacterial, fungal and blood parasite, steroid responsive meningitis is the most common form of this condition. As the name infers, this type of meningitis is particularly responsive to steroids, meaning a decent rate of success can be expected during treatment. Keep in mind that it's still potentially life-threatening. Steroid responsive meningitis is so named because the cause of this particular form of the disease is not known.

Symptoms of Steroid Responsive Meningitis in Dogs

Because of the fact that the use of steroids can be successful in leading to a full recovery, it's believed that [steroid responsive meningitis](#) is an autoimmune disease. An autoimmune problem develops when the body determines some part of itself to be a foreign matter, and begins to wage an attack on it. Steroid responsive meningitis has more of a tendency to strike younger dogs and certain breeds, but can affect any dog at any age. Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Lack of mobility due to stiffness
- Severe pain and resistance to touch
- Stiff or crooked neck
- Uncoordinated gait
- Paralysis or [seizures](#) (occasionally)

These symptoms are similar among all forms of meningitis in dogs, and some other neurological conditions, and therefore it's difficult to diagnose this condition based upon symptoms alone.

Testing and Treatment of Meningitis in Dogs

A final diagnosis can be determined by running a CT scan and/or a spinal tap. A CT scan will determine whether or not the tissue on the brain and spinal cord is inflamed. If not, meningitis can potentially be ruled out and signs of a different neurological disorder then be explored. A spinal tap aims to collect fluid from the vertebrae in the back. This fluid will be analyzed for the presence of meningitis. If the type of meningitis is determined to be bacterial, a series of high-dose antibiotics will be prescribed to attempt to kill the organism causing the condition. Steroid responsive meningitis is treated with corticosteroids daily for 2 to 8 weeks until initial signs have resolved. If symptoms recur and steroid treatment must be resumed, it may be discovered that another condition such as [vaccination](#) is present. Additional medications may be introduced to treat side effects such as seizure control, pain medication and nutritional supplements.

Other Forms of Meningitis in Dogs

Bacterial meningitis can be caused by staphylococcal infections and other bacteria. Systemic [fungal infections](#) like histoplasmosis and blastomycosis can cause meningitis. Viral meningitis, another form of this disease, is known to be caused by distemper and parvovirus. These types of the disease are difficult to treat and may become chronic. The severity of the condition and the speed at which it's diagnosed will have an effect upon how successful treatment will be. Dogs with meningitis will often need physical therapy and a long continuance of medication.

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- [Steroid Responsive Meningitis in Dogs](#)
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