

Diabetes Mellitus

General Information

Diabetes mellitus is a disease caused by a deficiency of insulin. Insulin is a hormone produced by the pancreas and is necessary for body tissues to use blood sugar. Without insulin, sugar remains in the blood and eventually passes into the urine. This causes increased urine production and thirst. Hunger increases because the body cannot use the sugar in the blood. As the disease progresses, chemicals called *ketones* accumulate, resulting in vomiting and dehydration. Eventually coma and death occur in untreated animals.

Diabetes mellitus is not a curable disease; but, with proper insulin administration, the disease can be controlled.

Important Points in Treatment

1. Blood and urine sugar levels must be monitored very carefully until your pet's condition is stabilized. Once your pet's insulin requirements are determined and blood sugar levels are stabilized, only the urine sugar level needs to be monitored.
2. *Insulin*: Give _____ unit(s) of insulin each day at _____ o'clock.
3. *Urine sugar*: Test for urine sugar each day at _____ o'clock. Test strip readings should be less than _____. Call the doctor if the reading exceeds this level.
4. *Diet*: Feed a diet high in protein and low in carbohydrates. Feed as follows: _____

5. *Activity*: Exercise decreases the need for insulin. For proper regulation, the amount of daily exercise must not vary.
6. *Low blood sugar reactions*: Insulin treatment may occasionally result in blood sugar levels that are too low. This is most likely to happen 3 to 7 hours after insulin treatment, especially with strenuous exercise. Your pet may seem weak, tired or uncoordinated, or may have a seizure. Always keep a sugar-containing syrup (for example, Karo) handy to treat low sugar levels. If your pet has a seizure, rub the syrup on the gums and inside the lips. Do not try to force a convulsing animal to swallow the syrup. Call the doctor if your pet does not improve within a few minutes.
7. *Hormone reactions*: Hormones present during "heat" and pregnancy antagonize the effects of insulin. Diabetic females should be spayed as soon as their insulin levels are regulated.
8. *Re-examination*: During the early weeks of treatment, several re-examinations may be necessary. Call the doctor when questions or problems arise. Make sure you fully understand all aspects of home care.

Notify the Doctor if Any of the Following Occur

- You cannot give the insulin as directed or urine sugar levels increase.
- Your pet's thirst and urination increase.
- Your pet has diarrhea or vomiting.
- Your pet acts weak or depressed.
- Your pet has repeated bouts of low blood sugar.
- Your pet has trouble breathing.