Parvo in Dogs

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Parvo in dogs is a highly contagious viral disease that is carried by white blood cells, targeting the gastro intestinal wall and attacking the digestive system and heart. Parvo symptoms in dogs appear 4 to 14 days after exposure and severe signs may include vomiting and bloody diarrhea.

Parvo in puppies under six months old, who have not had [vaccinations](https://www.petfinder.com/dogs/dog-health/vaccinations-guidelines/), is particularly dangerous as their developing immune system is often not strong enough to fight off the disease yet. Signs of Parvo in puppies such as diarrhea can quickly lead to dehydration, and treatment becomes more challenging if puppies have [roundworms](https://www.petfinder.com/dogs/dog-health/merial-dogs-roundworm/) or other internal [intestinal parasites](https://www.petfinder.com/dogs/dog-health/merial-protect-dog-parasites/), protozoa (such as Coccidia) or bacteria.

Despite aggressive therapy, Parvo in dogs may have a high fatality rate. On the other hand, many adult dogs that become infected never actually show clinical signs of parvo symptoms. [Rottweilers](https://www.petfinder.com/dog-breeds/rottweiler), Dobermans, Pit Bulls, [German shepherd](https://www.petfinder.com/dog-breeds/german-shepherd-dog) dogs and [Labrador retrievers](https://www.petfinder.com/dog-breeds/labrador-retriever) seem to be at higher risk for Parvovirus.

**Parvo infection vs Parvo prevention**

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| [**Infection**](https://www.petfinder.com/dogs/dog-health/parvo-in-dogs/#transmission) | [**Prevention**](https://www.petfinder.com/dogs/dog-health/parvo-in-dogs/#treatment) |
| Hands: Sanitize or wash hands immediately after being contact with any dogs or puppies, as well as kennels. | 1. Clean and properly disinfect kennels and everything inside. |
| Instruments: Disinfect all instruments & never reuse on other animals unless properly sanitized. | 2. Provide clear instructions about the dangers of spreading Parvo |
| Clothing: Remove and launder all clothing immediately after coming into contact with animals. | 3. Vaccinate puppies at 8 weeks |
| Food: Keep all food for infected dogs separate, remove used food bowls and thoroughly clean bowls after each use. | 4. Give puppies boosters every 3 -4 weeks, until 16-18 weeks of age |
| Water dishes: Provide fresh clean water; thoroughly sanitize all water bowls and never share bowls with other animals. | 5.  Susceptible breeds are advised vaccination until 20-22 weeks old |
| Toys: Dispose of toys in sealed bags, never reuse or share with other animals. | 6.  Deworm routinely |
| Bedding: Launder all bedding in hot water thoroughly, sanitize and disinfect all materials before returning it to kennel of infected dog. | 7.  Feed puppies best, affordable food |
| Insects and rodents: Safely exterminate insects and rodents in the shelter as these animals carry the virus from one location to the next. | 8.  Separate puppies by litter/age |
| Dog’s hair or coat: Never reuse brushes and grooming supplies on other animals, thoroughly sanitize all materials and keep dogs clean as hair and coats can carry the virus. | 9.  Provide disposable toys/bowls |
|  | 10. Use hand sanitizer and foot baths |
|  | 11. Restrict cleaning materials per room |
|  | 12. Avoid using mops |
|  | 13. Do not use common drain troughs |
|  | 14. Prevent high pressure hosing system usage |

**Parvo in Dogs: Transmission**

Parvo in dogs is one of the most common, serious, dog disease problems encountered in animal shelters. The virus is made tougher to get rid of by its immunity to disinfectants, allowing it to remain inactive in organic material in the environment for over one year.

Parvovirus is one of the most serious problems for shelters because dogs present as perfectly healthy and may be adopted out while they are incubating the disease, and then become ill a few days later in a new home. Transmission Parvo in dogs becomes effortless from dog-to-dog, mainly through exposure to contaminated poop, but also via contact with infected objects such as:

* Hands
* Instruments
* Clothing
* Food
* Water dishes
* Toys
* Bedding
* Insects and rodents
* Dog’s hair or coat

**10 Symptoms of Parvo in dogs**

Parvovirus affects the digestive system and the heart. The signs can vary widely and vary in mildness or severity. There can be subclinical infection with no signs or mild signs of lethargy and appetite loss that only lasts for 1 or 2 days. Parvo symptoms may include some or all on the following list:

1. Vomiting
2. Diarrhea, which is foul smelling and can be very bloody
3. Loss of appetite
4. Fever
5. Weakness
6. Depression
7. Dehydration
8. Heart-related Parvo symptoms could result in sudden death without other signs
9. Heart Parvo symptoms in dogs can cause sudden death weeks to months after apparent recovery.
10. Sudden onset of symptoms of congestive heart failure in puppies under 6 months of age can occur.

Parvo symptoms begin to appear within 4 – 14 days after the incubation period. Parvo symptoms in dogs and Parvo symptoms in puppies remain incubated until the virus is shed in the feces 4 – 5 days after exposure. The virus will also be shed in the feces for 2-3 weeks after an animal has recovered.

Quarantines should be in-effect for several days to watch for the onset of signs of Parvo in puppies, especially for new shelter pups. Recovering dogs should be isolated for 3 weeks before rejoining the general population.

**Parvo in Dogs: Treatment**

Treatment of Parvo symptoms in puppies consists of mostly supportive care so the body can produce enough antibodies of its own to neutralize the virus. Supportive care may include:

* Isolate\* sick dogs and puppies.
* Quarantine incoming dogs and puppies for 1 – 2 weeks if possible.
* Antibiotics to fight off secondary bacterial infections.
* Fluids to correct the dehydration.
* Fluids for control of the vomiting and diarrhea.
* Food restrictions that should be withheld and not given until the vomiting has stopped for at least 24 hours
* Limiting water that should be offered in small amounts only, as it may sometimes induce vomiting.

**5 Precautions about Parvo care**

Puppies that survive for 3-4 days generally have a good chance of making a full recovery within a week. Some considerations to think through at shelters\*:

1. Treatment **can take several days of intensive care**
2. Sufficient **recovery to reach adoptability may take weeks.**
3. The ability of the **virus to persist in the environment for years endangers the lives** of both the current and future canine residents.
4. Recovered **puppies should still be isolated** because they may still continue to shed virus.
5. Elisa fecal test kits can be used in the shelter to test for Parvo. However, **precautions to this test should consider that false negative results can be obtained** because Parvovirus is shed for a few days only.
	* Test results are most accurate within the first few days after infection
	* Test results within 5 days after clinical signs appear are also precise.
	* False positive results are often a result of recent vaccination with a modified live vaccine (within 5-12 days of vaccination).

*\*If a strict isolation area is not available for treatment, seriously ill dogs may have to be euthanized to curtail their suffering and minimize disease spread.*

**Parvo in dogs: Prevention**

Home remedies for Parvo in shelters is as simple as regular household bleach (sodium hypochlorite), it’s also one of the most inexpensive and effective means of neutralizing the virus.

***Dilute 1-part bleach to 32 parts water to make it safe to use around animals yet still be effective.***

If bleach is not used, the disinfectant being used must be tested and labeled as Parvocidal. Whichever disinfectant is used, it should remain in contact with the surface to be disinfected for at least 5-10 minutes to be effective.