

# **Intervertebral Disc Disease**

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## **Overview**

Intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) is a condition that occurs when pressure is placed on the spinal cord by disc material that herniates beneath or adjacent to the cord. It may be an acute or chronic condition in dogs.

The exact cause of disc degeneration is unknown but may be due to a change in the content of the disc material. When the disc involved is in the mid-portion or thoracolumbar area of the spine, the front legs are not affected but the back legs may be affected to varying degrees. Signs include mild back pain only or, in severe cases, complete paralysis of the rear legs.

Some breeds are prone to intervertebral disc disease such as the dachshund, Lhasa apso and Pekingese. IVDD most commonly occurs when animals are between three and seven years of age.

## **Diagnosis and Treatment Notes:**

- Intervertebral disc disease is generally diagnosed by a thorough history and physical examination including neurologic exam. X-rays of the spine and myelogram are needed to definitively diagnose spinal cord compression.
- Treatment depends on the severity of the disease, your individual pet, and your veterinarian. Medical therapy consists of rest and anti-inflammatory medication. Some dogs benefit from muscle relaxants. Surgical treatment may be recommended, particularly if the signs are severe or there is no response to medical therapy. Surgery involves removing the herniated disc. Discuss treatment details when your pet is diagnosed with this condition.

## **What to Watch for\*:**

- Back pain
- Reluctance to play
- Yelping when handled, petted or lifted
- Reluctance to climb stairs
- Walking drunk

- Inability to walk or paralysis

*\*Please notify us if you notice any of the above signs or if you have any questions!*