

Dog Weight Loss Fears

Sudden weight loss for your dog can mean liver or kidney disease, even cancer.

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Q. My 16-year-old Dachshund has recently gotten very skinny. He's otherwise relatively healthy, given his age. Other than some moaning and groaning first thing in the morning (I know this because he sleeps in bed with me), he shows no sign of being in pain. He is not interested in going for walks any more, so I've been respecting his wishes. Could this dramatic weight loss be due to loss of muscle mass because of his inactivity? And should I insist that he go for walks? A. It sounds like your Dachshund has arthritis, based on the early morning groaning and lack of interest in walking. It is not necessary to take him for walks, but I would consider taking him to your vet to have some arthritis medication prescribed. Sometimes, dog owners report dramatic improvements when their dogs start taking these medications. It is unlikely that your doggie's weight loss is due to loss of muscle mass. Significant weight loss is almost always a sign of some systemic disease like liver or kidney problems. To rule these out, have a general blood panel done, as well as a good physical exam. X-rays may also be a good idea. Kidney failure can cause weight loss if protein is lost in the urine, so you should also have a urinalysis done. In an older dog, you also have to be concerned about cancer. This is more common in older dogs than heart disease or any other systemic disease. Best, Jon Geller, DVM - Get More Advice From Dr. Geller -