

Golden Retriever With Fatigue

Fatigue can be a sign of a more serious problem.

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Anemia, or a low red blood cell count, due to a variety of causes: When dogs are low on red blood cells, they lose their ability to carry oxygen, and this can explain sudden fatigue or the inability to exercise. The three main categories of anemia are blood loss (internal or external), destruction of red blood cells by the body's immune system, and the failure of bone marrow to make new red blood cells as old ones die. Your veterinarian will be able to rule this out with a simple blood test called a hematocrit. A small tube of blood is spun in a centrifuge and the percentage of red cells in the tube is measured with a ruler-type device.

Many other possibilities exist, but without allowing your veterinarian do get a good history and exam, and start with some diagnostic testing, there's no way to be sure. The approach to these cases in veterinary medicine is to make a list of the most probable diseases, and start ruling them out with testing. Sometimes it turns out to be a minor, short-term problem, which I hope it is in this case.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

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