

## Dog's Swollen Abdomen Could Be Serious

**Anytime a dog's stomach swells suddenly, it calls for a trip to the vet.**

*Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. What would cause a dog's belly to look a lot larger in just a short period of time. Our dog hasn't had any contact with male dogs, so I was wondering what it could be other than pregnancy?

A. An unexplained enlargement or swelling of your dog's abdomen may be a medical or surgical emergency, especially if it happens suddenly. If you called our emergency hospital, we would tell you to come right in.

It could be a uterine infection about to rupture, a spleen or liver bleeding into the abdomen, bleeding due to ingestion of mouse poison, fluid from liver or heart failure, or Cushing's disease, a hormonal disease of the adrenal gland.

There is, in fact, no condition that would cause a harmless enlargement of the belly, except possibly excessive digestive gas or an episode of overeating.

At our emergency hospital, we are trained to "worry" about all of the bad things that can happen to pets. Since your female dog has not been spayed, I would be most concerned about a uterine infection. Untreated, these infections will result in sepsis, an infection of the bloodstream that is usually fatal. Please get in to see your veterinarian or go to a veterinary emergency hospital as soon as possible.