

## 'Old Age' Is Not a Diagnosis for Bloated Dog

**Dog with swollen abdomen most likely has Cushing's disease.**

*By Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. My 10-year-old Shih Tzu's abdomen has been bloated for a month or two. At first I thought he had gained weight, but then I realized that his stomach is as tight as a drum. It seems like he's always thirsty. Snickers was bouncy and filled with energy until he became bloated. My veterinarian says he's just old, but I think there could be a problem.

A. Your Shih Tzu may very well have Cushing's disease. It is no longer acceptable for a veterinarian to say, "He is probably just getting old."

The signs of Cushing's are increased water intake, a distended abdomen, lethargy, increased panting, and sometimes skin coat changes. It is caused by over-secretion of hormones by the adrenal gland.

The diagnosis is made by a blood test that must be done twice, several hours apart, following an injection of a special stimulating hormone.

If your veterinarian does not want to investigate your dog's symptoms, consider seeking a second opinion elsewhere. Most dog owners' instincts are correct regarding whether their dog has something significant going on medically.