



Associated Veterinary Specialists, PC, LTD

12462G Natural Bridge Road

Bridgeton, Missouri 63044

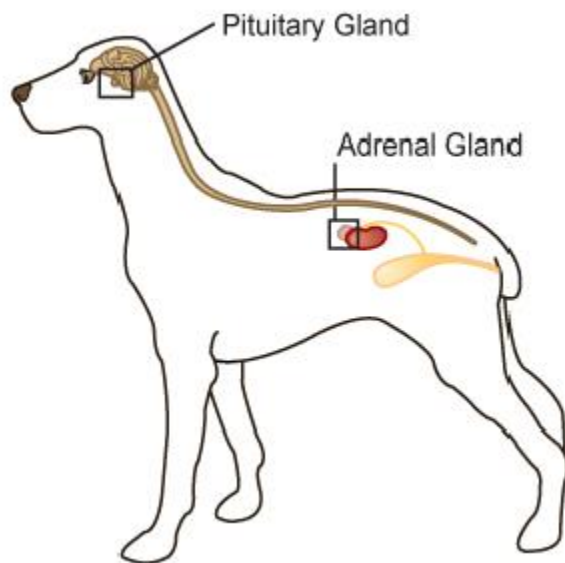
314-739-1510

Emergency 314-739-3330

Canine Hypoadrenocorticism (Addison's Disease)

Addison's disease is the common name for hypoadrenocorticism. Hypoadrenocorticism is a disease where hormone production from the outer part of the adrenal gland is diminished or lowered.

The adrenal glands are small, paired glands that live next to the kidneys (see picture below). These glands produce many different hormones and chemicals that regulate different vital functions throughout the body.



One of the most important hormones produced by the adrenal glands is cortisol. Cortisol is steroid that is vital to many functions in the body. Another important hormone produced by the adrenal glands is aldosterone. Aldosterone helps to regulate the electrolytes and balance water in the body. When these two hormones are not produced by the adrenal glands, it is defined as Addison's disease. In the dog the most common causes of this disease include damage to the adrenal gland, infection or immune mediated causes. This disease can also occur secondary to medication administration.

Clinical signs of Addison's disease can either be acute and life threatening or chronic, vague and non-specific. Chronic clinical signs can wax and wane and may include vomiting, weight loss, diarrhea and increased thirst and urination.

In the acute, more serious form of Addison's disease, clinical signs may include:

- Weakness
- Vomiting



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-Diarrhea

-Collapse

This is described as an Addisonian crisis and is a medical emergency! Hospitalization and stabilization therapy with IV fluids and supportive care is required to help correct electrolyte abnormalities and hypotension.

The diagnosis of Addison's disease may include the following:

-Medical history and clinical signs

-Blood tests including a complete blood count (CBC) and chemistry panel to evaluate electrolytes, liver and kidney function and inflammation

-An ACTH stimulation test evaluates the ability of the adrenal glands to produce cortisol and is require for the definitive diagnosis

-An abdominal ultrasound or radiographs may be recommended to rule out another underlying disease

Once the patient is stabilized and Addison's disease has been diagnosed, most dogs can be successfully treated with oral or injectable medications. Your dog can live a normal quality of life as long as he/she continues to receive the prescribed medications to help manage their disease. Cortisol is replaced with the daily administration of a steroid and aldosterone can be replaced with a daily, oral medication or a monthly injection.

Addison's disease is a lifelong disease that requires long-term therapy of both the cortisol and aldosterone. During stressful times, including travelling, boarding or during illness, some of the medications may have to be increased as prescribed by your veterinarian. Ongoing monitoring of your pet including follow-up blood tests to monitor electrolytes will likely be recommended in order to make sure your pet is stabilized and responding appropriately to the medications.

The majority of patients with Addison's disease have a good to excellent prognosis once diagnosed and stabilized with appropriate therapy.

Kimberly Loyd, DVM, DACVIM

Reference: Seattle Veterinary Specialists