

WHAT IS DIABETES MELLITUS?

Diabetes mellitus literally means “sweet urine” and is named for the large amount of glucose in the urine of diabetic patients. Diabetes occurs in pets due to a deficiency of, or resistance to insulin by the body. Insulin, which enables the body to utilize glucose, is produced by specialized cells in the pancreas called beta cells. Without insulin, the body cannot use glucose for energy and therefore, the glucose levels become very high.

WHAT ARE THE TYPES OF DIABETES IN PETS?

There are two types of diabetes that occur in dogs and cats. **Type I** requires insulin, but if caught early, may only need a very small amount of insulin. **Type II** diabetes is due to insulin-resistance by the body tissues and may or may not require insulin. Type I is by far the most common in dogs and cats.

WHAT ARE THE CLINICAL SIGNS OF DIABETES?

Clinical signs of diabetes include increased drinking and urination as well as weight loss despite a good appetite.

HOW IS DIABETES DIAGNOSED?

Diabetes mellitus is diagnosed by bloodwork and a urinalysis.

HOW IS DIABETES TREATED?

Diabetes mellitus may be treated in dogs and cats with insulin injections. There are numerous types of insulin, and all are used for specific reasons. Based on past experience and the medical condition of your pet, your doctor will select the type of insulin which is best for your pet. The insulin will have to administered at the same time every day. In most cases, it is important that the pet eat before giving an insulin injection as hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) may result otherwise. Although there are some cases where a dog or cat may recover from diabetes, most pets require insulin for life. To ensure that the patient is getting the correct dose of insulin, a blood glucose curve can be done. It often takes a couple months to get a new diabetic patient regulated. Once the blood glucose is regulated, patients are rechecked every 3-6 months. Although there are long term complications that can occur with diabetes, most pets with diabetes go on to live long, happy lives.

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