



Tummy Upsets & What to Do

As with any dis-ease, a gastro-intestinal tract (GIT) upset is the body's way of saying that something is wrong. With vomiting and diarrhea, it's generally nature's way of cleansing out or ridding itself of something that is causing irritation or upset. Vomiting occurs when the disturbance is in the upper GIT, while diarrhea develops when it's in the lower GIT.

There a number of reasons for GIT disturbances, some due to longer term (chronic) problems such as food intolerances, inflammatory bowel disease, worms, organ failures and others which occur more suddenly (acute) such as toxins or poison exposure, something being stuck like as a furball, various infections both bacterial and viral, rotten food being eaten or even simple things such as stress or a sudden diet change, especially common in young kittens.

If your dog or cat is still relatively bright and the vomiting or diarrhea is not profuse, it may be possible to help to support their body and let it run its course. If your animal is collapsed, vomiting profusely, has blood coming out or is straining unsuccessfully then seek the advice of your vet as soon as possible.

Practical management of a GIT upset involves giving the GIT a rest, ensuring that the animal has sufficient fluids and salts, supporting the GIT to help toxins pass though and to allow for repair. If this does not work then there is likely to be a more complex underlying issue and further diagnostics or treatment would be warranted.

First and foremost ensure that your animal has sufficient fluid, with plenty of fresh water to prevent dehydration, as well as electrolytes (salts) and glucose which is especially important in very young animals whose glucose levels plummet very quickly. This can be in the form of a broth created by boiling up meat, rice and vegetables or a mixture of 4 cups of warm water and ¼ cup honey. In animals that aren't drinking, this can be dripped in with a dropper or syringed in carefully by placing small amounts on the animals tongue and allowing it to swallow while it's sitting or lying upright.

Slippery elm powder, kaolin and bismuth are wonderful internal poultices to help soothe and heal the inflamed GIT lining. Use 20-40 mg of dried slippery elm per kilogram three times a day mixed in water or food. Alternately mix 1 teaspoon of powder in 1 cup of water and give kittens ¼ teaspoon, cats and small dogs 1 teaspoon, medium dogs 30 – 60 ml and large dogs 90 – 120 ml 3 times daily.

In adult animals allow 24 hours before giving any food to give the GIT a rest and when you do, commence with bland food such as boiled lean chicken, egg and pasta or rice feeding 4 – 6 smaller meals through the day. Young pups and kittens require food much sooner, giving them a 4 – 12 hour fast depending on their condition should be sufficient.



Adding oatbran and probiotics from unsweetened acidophilus/lactobacillus yoghurt or commercial formulations will help to normalize bacterial flora in the GIT and minimize overgrowth of the “bad bugs”. Activated charcoal might also be useful if there are toxins present either from poisons or produced from the overgrowth of certain bacteria. Use 2 grams per kilogram daily.

Various homeopathics are also often useful and are best used under the guidance of a homeopath. Use either complex remedies or individual 30 C potencies 4 hourly for 3 doses and if there’s no change then another remedy is usually indicated. In very acute cases, dose more frequently and then decrease the frequency to effect. Useful remedies are Nux Vomica for occasional vomiting, Arsenic for vomiting and diarrhea where the animal is thirsty and Merc Cor for acute diarrhea.

In chronic conditions such as IBD, aloe vera juice is also beneficial to help improve digestion and normalize GIT function however ensure that it is not preserved with sodium benzoate or benzoic acid which is toxic to cats. A dose of 1 ml per 5 kilograms daily is good support but be aware that it can also have a slight laxative effect.

For the management of longer term problems various nutritional programmes including optimal amounts of nutrients such as omega 3 fatty acids, as well as regular treatments with therapies such as NIS (Neurological Integration System), Acupuncture, homeopathy, Bowen therapy, etc. can help to make a marked difference.