

Puppy Hypoglycemia: Low Blood Sugar

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Hypoglycemia simply means a low blood sugar. Glucose is the form of sugar found within the bloodstream. Glucose is formed during the digestion of foods and it can be stored within the liver in a storage form called glycogen. Most instances of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia) in the puppy are the result of inadequate nutrition; either not enough or poor quality (undigestible) food. Excessive exercise may also cause the body to use up more sugar than is available.

What are the symptoms?

A puppy with hypoglycemia will lack energy. Glucose (sugar) is the fuel the body burns for energy; without it the puppy is listless. In severe instances, the puppy may even seizure, since glucose is necessary for the brain tissue and muscles to function. These hypoglycemic episodes will cause the puppy to fall over and appear weak or comatose.

What are the risks?

The risks depend on the severity or extent of the lack of blood sugar. If it is due to lack of food or excessive exercise it can be easily corrected. If however, the underlying cause is more serious, such as liver disease preventing the storage of glucose as glycogen, or intestinal disease preventing the proper digestion and/or absorption of food, then hypoglycemia may be chronic and life threatening.

What is the management?

If a puppy is listless due to low blood sugar, it is imperative to immediately provide sugar. Karo syrup and honey are excellent sugar sources and should be fed to the puppy. If the puppy fails to respond to sugar, or the hypoglycemic episodes are frequent, then a thorough exam by a veterinarian is in order. It must be determined if the low blood sugar is simply the result of inadequate nutrition or a more severe underlying disease.