

# My dog is collapsing

## Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists

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**C**ollapse is always very frightening for dog owners. Collapse episodes can be related to heart problems, metabolic problems (e.g. mineral or glucose imbalance) or neurologic problems. Sometimes collapse episodes are nothing to worry about. However, sometimes they can be caused by serious underlying disease, such as heart disease and can be life threatening. Further investigation is always strongly recommended, if your dog shows collapsing episodes.

### What are underlying causes?

- **Heart problems:** abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia) can cause very slow heart rate or very fast heart rate, which interferes with the normal pumping function of the heart, resulting in collapse. Arrhythmia can be life threatening and animals with severe arrhythmias can die suddenly. Other heart problems which can lead to collapse include cardiomyopathy (weak heart muscle), valve disease and a number of other heart conditions
- **Bloodpressure:** abnormal pressure in the pulmonary (lung) circulation or systemic (general) circulation can lead to collapse
- **Neurologic problems:** seizures
- **Metabolic problems:** liver issues, low blood glucose levels, anaemia, etc.

### What should be done?

It is important to find the underlying problem as episodes can be fatal. Unfortunately it can be difficult to find an answer; there are many possible causes, collapse episodes tend to be intermittent and are therefore difficult for the vet to observe. Fortunately there are a variety of tests which we can use to determine the cause of collapse. A good starting point is a detailed description of the episodes or a videotape of an episode.

Blood tests are used to check for metabolic problems. If heart problems are suspected, then an ultrasound of the heart and ECG monitoring are usually necessary. For dogs that seem to seizure, a scan of the brain and sampling of spinal fluid is often required.

### What should I do, if my dog collapses?

There is very little you can do to help your dog at the time of the collapse, but make sure he/she is comfortable and away from sharp objects if seizing. Carefully observing/remembering what your dog was doing before, during and after the collapse will always be helpful. Questions you will be asked by the veterinarian to decide about the next steps will be:

- How long did the episode last?
- Was your dog normal before and after the episode?
- Was there anything which could have triggered the episode (e.g. excitement, cough, vomiting)?
- Was there any urination or defecation during the episode?
- Did your dog lose consciousness?
- Was your dog flaccid or rigid/stiff?
- Did the gums look pink or pale or grey?

### Can it be treated?

Treatment depends on the underlying disease, therefore diagnosis is essential. We often cannot cure the underlying disease, but we can nearly always make a good improvement with treatment, once we know what is wrong.

### Information about SCVS

We provide cardiology referral services for veterinary practices in much the same way that a medical consultant would for general practitioner (GP) practices in the field of human medicine. We work closely with your vet, using our specialist knowledge, experience and equipment to help provide the best possible treatment for your pet.

We provide a 24/7 cardiology referral service to vets across Southern England, the Isle of Wight and the Channel Islands.

We are aware that referral services can be expensive, however there are usually lots of options for managing your pet's particular problem. You can be sure we will do our best to find the best and most cost effective solution for you and your animal.