



Stress in our Dogs: Common Triggers & Signs

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It can be hard to believe that our pampered pooches may be stressed. After all, they don't have 40-hour-plus workweeks, project deadlines, commutes in heavy traffic, teenagers, mortgage payments, or credit card bills!

However, while their stressors may not be the same as ours, research has established that dogs can and often do experience stress, and that stress may compromise their overall health and welfare.

Research has also revealed the influence of the brain-gut connection: the release of norepinephrine (the "fight or flight" hormone) affects gastrointestinal physiology, which often results in digestive upset and diarrhea. This can create yet another stressful experience for your dog and for you — house-soiling!

Some dogs may only experience short lived stressors, but other dogs may live with chronic stress. Contact your veterinarian to schedule a consultation in which she can help you become more aware and gain a better understanding of your dog's stress triggers, related behaviors, and consequent physical symptoms.

Some common stress triggers for dogs include:

1. Novelty — exposure to new items, new people, new animals, etc.
2. Loud noises — fireworks, thunderstorms, etc.
3. Changes in housing — moving to a new home, boarding, etc.
4. Changes in household members — new baby, new pet, loss of pet or human, houseguests, etc.
5. Changes in household routine — new job schedule, kids returning to school, holidays, etc.
6. Punitive training methods — shock collars, yelling, hitting, etc.
7. Invasion of personal space — disruption when resting, hugging, kissing, forcibly restraining, etc.
8. Lack of outlets for normal breed behaviors — herding, running, retrieving, etc.
9. Separation from human family members — separation anxiety, etc.
10. Poor (strained) relationships with other household members (pets or humans).

While there are individual variations in the expression of stress and there can be other causes for these behavioral signs, the following signs are often associated with stressed dogs:

1. Nose/lip licking
2. Yawning
3. Panting
4. Reduced or absent appetite
5. Diarrhea
6. Tail lowered or tucked
7. Ears pulled or pinned back
8. Cowering/crouched body posture and/or hiding
9. Trembling/shaking
10. Increased vocalizations — whining, howling, barking

If a dog exhibits these signs of stress, try to identify and remove or reduce the stress triggers.

If your dog exhibits these signs of stress, schedule a consultation with your veterinarian so you can work together to identify and remove or reduce the stress triggers and their consequences for your dog.

If your dog is less than 30 lbs, ask your veterinarian about switching your dog to a clinical nutritional solution such as Hill's® Prescription Diet® i/d® Stress, formulated to be easily digestible, with ingredients to help manage stress to help reduce the risk of stress-related digestive upset.



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