

Vaginitis in Puppies

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Puppy vaginitis is an inflammation of the vagina that occurs in puppies. Most cases occur between the ages of 6 weeks and 8 months. Puppy vaginitis usually resolves when the puppy matures and goes through her first estrus, although some cases may not improve.

Most puppies don't show any signs, but others may have sticky, cloudy, white/yellow discharge (the amount will vary), and crusty hair around the vulva. Puppies may lick their vulva a lot and develop skin irritation and inflammation. The signs are not necessarily constant. The episodes can occur intermittently, and can last for weeks to months.



Photo courtesy of DepositPhotos

Although puppy vaginitis is fairly common, your veterinarian may recommend diagnostic tests (e.g. microscopic examination of the discharge, physical examination, CBC, diagnostic imaging, etc.) to help determine if the discharge is actually benign puppy vaginitis or the result of a more significant problem, such as bladder infection, abnormal urinary tract anatomy, hooded/inverted/recessed vulva, foreign body, etc. Bladder infection, abnormal urinary tract anatomy, foreign body, etc. usually require medical or surgical treatment. Hooded/inverted/recessed vulva can be common in puppies that haven't undergone estrus; there are two main treatments for this vulvar problem. One is letting the puppy go through an estrous cycle in the hope that the vulva will mature and change shape. The second is performing an episiotomy/vulvoplasty to surgically change the vulva's shape.

Basic, uncomplicated puppy vaginitis is usually more of an annoyance than a true medical problem. The important thing is to differentiate between it and a more serious problem.

A major part of treatment for puppy vaginitis is time and patience. You have to wait for her to go through puberty. Once the puppy has had an estrus cycle, the problem usually resolves. You can help prevent skin irritation by keeping the skin around her vulva clean by using such items as wet baby wipes, damp paper towels, etc.

Your veterinarian will know what treatment might best help your particular puppy.

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