

Medical Alert: Aspirin Use in Dogs

Anti-inflammatory medications are commonly used in dogs to treat pain and swelling associated with surgery, arthritis, injury or tumor. The most commonly used medications are called NSAIDs (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs). Aspirin is one of these drugs.

Before the advent of such NSAIDs as carprofen, deracoxib, meloxicam, etc. aspirin was used commonly, but aspirin is no longer routinely recommended for pain or inflammation for dogs due to the high risk of detrimental effects.

Just as in humans, aspirin used in dogs can have the same damaging effects on the stomach. It decreases chemicals (prostaglandins) in the body which helps protect the lining of the stomach. This increases the risk of stomach ulcer and perforation (rupture) of the stomach wall. Giving buffered or "coated" aspirin (this includes "dog aspirin") does not significantly decrease the detrimental effects on the stomach since aspirin affects stomach prostaglandins both by direct contact with the stomach lining and systemically once in the bloodstream.

Aspirin also interferes with blood clotting. This is not usually of immediate concern, but puts a dog at high risk of excess bleeding should surgery or dentistry be needed.

The doctors at Intermountain do not recommend using aspirin for any type of long term pain management due to both of these harmful side effects. There are currently more than 10 pain medications available for use in dogs that are safer than aspirin. With such good options, why take the chance on aspirin? Aspirin may be cheap, but long-term could be much costlier to overall health.