

What are the treatment options?

If your dog has been diagnosed with MVD but does not have an enlarged heart, treatment is not usually required. However, regular monitoring is important to monitor the progression of the disease.

If your dog has been diagnosed with MVD and an enlarged heart but is not showing any obvious signs of the disease (asymptomatic) then the vet may recommend treatment which will provide the following:

- Slow down the progression of the disease.
- Extend your dog's symptom-free time by delaying the onset of heart failure.
- Improve your dog's quality and length of life.

Treatment works by opening up the blood vessels that carry blood to and from the heart. This reduces the work your dog's heart has to do. It also increases the strength and efficiency of your dog's heartbeat which in turn improves the pumping action. For the latest research on how medication can prolong the onset of heart failure, visit <https://www.epictrial.com/epic-study-results>



Consulting Times

Hillock Lane Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 7pm

Saturday
8.30am to 1pm



Blackpool Surgery

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Dogs & Heart Disease

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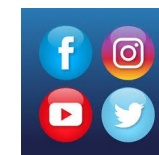
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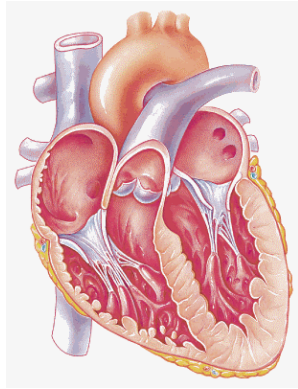
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The basics!

Your dog's heart pumps blood around its body. Each heartbeat delivers fresh blood, rich in oxygen and nutrients to all of the vital organs and tissues.

The heart is divided into 4 separate chambers. There are valves between the upper and lower chambers which open and shut in sequence so that blood only flows in one direction.



What is heart disease?

The most common heart disease in dogs is 'Mitral Valve Disease' (MVD). It can affect all breeds but is most common in small and medium sized dogs from 4-5 years onwards.

However, some breeds, such as Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Miniature Poodle, Miniature Schnauzer, Chihuahua, Fox Terrier and Boston Terrier are even more likely to develop this disease.

What is MVD?

In MVD, the mitral valve in the heart becomes thick, lumpy, distorted and leaky. With each heartbeat, blood is forced through the damaged valve in the wrong direction. This abnormal flow of blood can be heard by a vet as a 'heart murmur' when they listen with a stethoscope.

There are two phases of MVD; a long silent phase where your dog will not show any signs or symptoms of there being a problem and a shorter phase where the heart cannot cope and your dog will show symptoms of heart disease.

What causes MVD?

MVD is a slowly progressive disease that gets worse over time as a result of the ageing process. A dog with MVD can live for many years without having any other symptoms apart from a

murmur.

Over time, the leak can get worse and as more blood flows the wrong way through the heart, the murmur gets louder. This puts the heart under greater strain so to compensate, the heart becomes larger and pumps harder. Eventually there comes a point where the heart can no longer cope with the additional strain and fails to pump enough blood around the body. This is known as 'heart failure'.

It is important to note that not all dogs with MVD develop heart failure. Dogs who go into heart failure are those whose heart has enlarged as a consequence of MVD. Typically, dogs with both MVD and an enlarged heart will develop heart failure within 2 years.

How would I know if my dog has a problem?

Initially symptoms of heart failure can be quite subtle. As the disease worsens the symptoms become more severe as the heart's function deteriorates. Symptoms of heart failure include:

- Increased breathing rate.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Tiredness.
- Difficulty exercising.
- Coughing
- Fainting/collapse.

How does the vet know if my dog has heart disease?

As part of a full health check, the vet will listen to your dog's heart beat through a stethoscope. This is a very straight forward, non-invasive and quick procedure that can give the vet a good indication as to whether your dog's heart is working as it should.

If a murmur is detected they may recommend further tests to establish if your dog has an enlarged heart. There are two tests that the

vet may recommend to determine this:

- X-ray—this enables the vet to assess the overall size of your dog's heart as well as checking for any fluid build up in the lungs. Fluid in the lungs would indicate the presence of heart failure.
- Ultra-sound—this allows the vet to visualise and assess the inside of the heart, enabling them to take measurements to assess the heart size.

Neither test is painful and anaesthetic is not always needed to perform the test. The vet will discuss with you which tests will be right for your dog.

Why do I need to know if my dog's heart is enlarged?

It's important because it will allow the vet to:

- Identify whether your dog would benefit from treatment.
- Provide an accurate prognosis.
- Monitor the progress of the disease.

Once all the information is gathered, the vet can discuss with you the results.

If your dog's heart is a normal size, this is a good sign as it means your dog has a lower risk of developing heart failure imminently. It is important to remember that MVD is a disease that gets worse over time.



Therefore, even if your dog's heart is not yet enlarged, it is likely that the vet will recommend that tests are repeated every 6 to 12 months to monitor how their heart is coping.