



# Pyometra (Uterine Infection) in Dogs and Cats

## A Serious, Life-Threatening Condition in Unspayed Pets

### What Is Pyometra?

Pyometra is a severe bacterial infection of the uterus that affects **unspayed (intact) female dogs and cats**. It typically develops **weeks to months after a heat cycle**. During this condition, the uterus fills with infected fluid and pus, which can quickly become life-threatening if not treated promptly.

### Why Does Pyometra Occur?

Pyometra develops due to a combination of normal hormonal changes and bacterial infection:

- **Hormonal changes after heat:** Progesterone causes the uterine lining to thicken and the cervix to close, creating an ideal environment for bacteria.
- **Bacterial entry:** Bacteria (most commonly *E. coli*) can move from the vagina into the uterus.
- **Repeated heat cycles:** Pets that go through multiple heat cycles without pregnancy may develop changes in the uterine lining that increase infection risk.
- **Age and breed factors:** Most common in **middle-aged to older unspayed females**, though it can occur at any age.

### Common Signs to Watch For

Signs may vary and can worsen quickly:

- Lethargy or weakness
- Decreased appetite
- Increased thirst and urination
- Vomiting or fever
- Abdominal swelling or discomfort
- Vaginal discharge (often thick or pus-like)
- Rapid breathing or collapse in severe cases

**⚠ Important:** Some pets show **no vaginal discharge**, which can delay detection.



## Types of Pyometra

- **Open Pyometra:**  
The cervix is open, allowing pus to drain from the uterus. This form is often easier to recognize.
- **Closed Pyometra:**  
The cervix is closed, trapping infection inside the uterus. This form is **more dangerous** and can cause rapid, severe illness.

## How Is Pyometra Diagnosed?

Your veterinarian may use:

- Physical examination
- Bloodwork (CBC and chemistry panel)
- Urinalysis
- Abdominal ultrasound or X-rays

These tests help confirm the diagnosis and assess how sick your pet is.

## Treatment Options

### **Surgical spay (ovariohysterectomy)**

- The **recommended and most effective treatment**
- Removes the ovaries and infected uterus
- Eliminates the infection and prevents recurrence

Supportive care often includes IV fluids, antibiotics, and pain control.

## Risks and Prognosis

- Untreated pyometra can lead to **sepsis, kidney failure, uterine rupture, and death**
- Prognosis is **generally good with prompt surgery**
- Delayed treatment significantly increases risk
- **Closed pyometra** carries the highest immediate danger

## Prevention

- **Spaying before or early in life** is the best prevention



- If breeding is planned, discuss health monitoring and risks with your veterinarian
- Routine veterinary exams are especially important for intact females

### Aftercare Following Pyometra Surgery

- **Hospitalization:** Often 24–72+ hours for monitoring, fluids, and antibiotics
- **Incision care:** Keep clean and dry; prevent licking with an e-collar
- **Activity restriction:** Limit activity for 10–14 days or as directed
- **Medications:** Give all antibiotics and pain medications exactly as prescribed
- **Follow-up visits:** Needed to ensure proper healing and recovery

### When to Contact Us Immediately

Call us or seek emergency care if your pet experiences:

- Fever or persistent vomiting
- Worsening lethargy, weakness, or collapse
- Sudden swelling, redness, or discharge from the incision
- Refusal to eat for more than 24 hours
- Difficulty breathing
- Any new or concerning signs after discharge