



Cushing's Disease information sheet Martin and Carr.

What is Cushing's disease?

Dogs with Cushing's disease produce excessive amounts of cortisol. This is a hormone that can have harmful effects on other organs and on the ability of the body to regulate itself.

What causes Cushing's disease?

Cushing's disease will usually occur as a result of a tumour—often benign—of either the pituitary gland in the brain or in the adrenal gland. Regardless of the cause the symptoms are caused by the overproduction of cortisol. The aim of treatment is to block this overproduction.

What happens if you do not treat the disease?

Left untreated Cushing's disease progresses and often makes animals incontinent. Other life-threatening diseases often follow including diabetes, blood clots etc.

How can I recognise Cushing's disease?

Cushing's disease is more often seen in older dogs especially smaller breeds. Hair loss, pot belly, skin diseases, increased thirst and more frequent urination often accompanied by a ravenous appetite are more common symptoms.

My vet is suspicious of Cushing's disease. Why so many tests?

It is most important to get an accurate diagnosis. Initially a full blood profile will be performed along with usually a urine analysis.

More specific tests include the ACTH test and the Low Dose Dexamethasone test. Sometimes it is necessary to perform both tests.

We may also recommend ultrasound examination of the abdomen.

If you are suspicious of Cushing's disease do you always treat?

Normally yes ,BUT only if the symptoms are unacceptable. Sometimes results of tests with be inconclusive and the symptoms mild. In these cases often it is better to wait three months or so and repeat the tests unless the symptoms are worsening.

Can you cure the disease?

Cushing's disease cannot be cured but it can be successfully managed and controlled through medication. Vetoryl is the only licensed treatment for Cushing's disease in the UK .It contains a drug called trilostane that blocks the production of cortisol.

Do you need to follow up with treatment and tests?

Yes. There is no set dose for any individual .Dose adjustments are common in the early stages of treatment. Monitoring of the effects of treatment are most important.

The monitoring is done by further blood tests namely ACTH tests and electrolyte monitoring at 10 days, 4 weeks, 12 weeks and then every three months after the commencement of treatment.

If a dose change is made the interval of test follow up will be brought forward.