



**Upright Canine Brigade**

...Ask me about my chair...

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What is megaesophagus (ME)?**

The tube that carries food and water to the stomach is called the esophagus. Megaesophagus is an enlarged esophagus. The muscles become weak and flaccid and no longer propel food and water to the stomach. This leads to regurgitation of food and water. Regurgitation is a leading sign of ME. Also see the document [Why M.E?](#)

### **2. What is the difference between regurgitation and vomiting?**

When a dog vomits, he will look distressed and drop head and heave. There is usually noise associated with vomiting. It is an active motion. You can observe stomach muscles contracting. Food is expelled digested. When a dog regurgitates he will drop head and food will simply roll out of the mouth. It is generally a passive quiet motion. No contractions of stomach muscles. Food is expelled "undigested".

### **3. What are the signs and symptoms of aspiration pneumonia (AP)?**

Common signs of AP include the dog showing signs of having trouble breathing, congestion, secretions from nose, coughing or sneezing, not drinking water or eating, incessant panting, a bluish tinge to the skin, dehydration, fever and lethargy.

### **4. What causes aspiration pneumonia?**

When a dog regurgitates some of the food, water or saliva can be inhaled into the lungs causing an infection. Luckily this doesn't necessary happen every time a dog regurgitates.

### **5. What is the best course of action to take when I suspect my dog has AP?**

If you suspect AP getting to the vet ASAP is vital to your dog's health. It usually takes 2 antibiotics for 4-6 weeks to totally clear the infection. 3 way chest X-rays are strongly advised to be sure it has cleared completely. Nebulizer treatments are very helpful. Please read more information on our [home](#) page also see [My Dog has AP How Can I help?](#) from the home page.

## **6. How is megaesophagus diagnosed?**

ME is generally diagnosed with a regular radiograph (X-ray) or by barium swallow X-ray. Please see more from our home page [How is Megaesophagus Diagnosed?](#)

## **7. Are there any surgeries that can correct megaesophagus?**

If the megaesophagus is due to a birth defect known as persistent right aortic arch (PRAA) there is a surgery to correct that. Please see more on our [PRAA](#) Tab. There is a new study from Missouri State University underway for correction of the LES. Please see more under our [Research and Studies](#) tab.

## **8. What is the best way to manage megaesophagus?**

Upright feeding in either a bailey chair or some other way to position them as vertical as possible is usually the best way to manage feeding an ME dog. Please see our [Recipes](#) tab for alternative ways that have worked for some dogs and recipes that have proven to work for some dogs with ME.

## **9. Are there any drugs that may help the condition?**

There is a list of frequently prescribed medications on our home page. Please see [What are some of the common medications given for ME?](#) Generally, pro-motility drugs and antacids are prescribed. Not all dogs with ME need to take medicine.

## **10. Should I have the vet check for a primary cause or disease?**

ALWAYS. If diagnosed as a young puppy have your vet rule out PRAA. If the dog was not born with ME it is important to check for a primary disease. Please see the document [Why M.E?](#) for a complete list. Also visit our [PRAA](#) tab and [Myasthenia Gravis](#) tab.

## **11. Can any dog present with megaesophagus?**

YES. Any breed at any age can present with ME.

## **12. What should my ME dog eat?**

This may vary from dog to dog. Some dogs need an oatmeal consistency or a liquefied diet while others do better with small meatballs dropped from overhead so they are not chewed rather swallowed whole. It is all trial and error. Your vet may have some suggestions for a prescription food that meets your dog's requirements. Please visit our [Recipes](#) tab for ideas.

## **13. My megaesophagus dog has trouble with water. What can I do?**

This tends to be a common problem for some dogs. To better hydrate your dog you can add water to your dog's food. Keep in mind that some canned foods have a substantial amount of water in them already. You can make your dog gelatin blocks to help hydrate. You can add to the water a product called "Thick-It" to help thicken the water. You can give your dog subcutaneous fluid via injection. Please visit our home page and watch [Carter's Video](#) on how to do subcutaneous fluid injections. Visit our [Recipes](#) tab to learn how to make

gelatin cubes for your dog. To determine how much fluids your dog needs daily, visit our [Links to Info we Love](#).

#### **14. What is a neck hug and why might my dog need one?**

Dogs generally sleep with their heads lower than their body. When this happens saliva can pool in the esophagus causing the dog to regurgitate. A Neck Hug or Pro-Collar is very helpful in keeping your dogs head elevated. Visit our tab [Wag Tail Farms](#) for more information.

#### **15. What is a bailey chair and where can I find one?**

A bailey chair is a specially designed eating chair for megaesophagus dogs. It keeps them upright during and after feeding time. Some dogs need to remain in their chairs for 30 minutes or longer to allow gravity to do the work their esophagus cannot do any longer. Visit our tab marked [Bailey Chairs 4 Dogs](#) for a direct link to where you can purchase one. Here is a link to instructions on making your own [https://issuu.com/editorgnrn/docs/bailey s chair instructions](https://issuu.com/editorgnrn/docs/bailey_s_chair_instructions)

#### **16. Besides a bailey chair what can I use to keep my dog vertical?**

You can also substitute common household items like a waste paper basket, rubber made trash can, if small enough a baby swing, high chair, baby walker or a baby bjorn baby carrier to hold them upright. Some have used an inverted bar stool.

#### **17. My dog's stools are loose. What can I do?**

First, always check in with your vet if your dog's stools are loose or he's encountering diarrhea. Your vet may want to check for parasites or order specific blood tests to make sure there isn't a bigger problem looming. Generally, adding a little 100% pure canned pumpkin can be an easy solution. Your vet may prescribe a GI antibiotic or suggest another product.

#### **18. What is the best way to clean regurge off the carpet?**

A dust pan and squeegee works wonders!

#### **19. My Vet is recommending a Feeding Tube. Is this a good idea?**

Feeding tubes save lives. Gastric Feeding tubes, by passing the esophagus can be a temporary solution to sustain weight and nutrition or a permanent way of feeding. There is more information and a how to video. See [Feeding Tubes](#)

#### **20. Are there vets that specialize in ME and MG (Myasthenia Gravis)**

Your general practitioner (GP) vet may be all you need if they are knowledgeable, listen to your concerns and are willing to learn or consult with a board certified Internal Medicine Specialist for ME and a Neurologist DVM for myasthenia gravis and other neurological diseases. See our document from the home page [Member Recommended Vets and Specialist](#)

### **21. Can my dog live a normal life with ME?**

With dedicated pet parents, a good vet and the proper management techniques in place many dogs live a very normal life. Take a moment to read our [Blog](#) page, [Our Stories](#) page and our [Press Room](#) page for inspiration!

### **22. Where can I reach out for help to speak with other ME parents?**

You can connect with thousands of pet parents on FaceBook by clicking on the [red ribbons](#) at the bottom of the home page. These are very active support groups that are there to talk to 24/7 from around the world.

### **23. Will my dog have megaesophagus forever?**

There are a small percentage of dogs that are born with ME where the ME resolves before the age of one year old. If the ME is the result of a primary disease such as myasthenia gravis for instance, the ME can resolve with treatment of the underlying disease. That is why it is always “best to test”. Your dog may have ME for life but that doesn’t have to slow them down. There is hope for ME!

For more information visit our [Links to Info We Love](#) and our Blog post [MegaEWhat I Wish I knew at the Start](#)

\* Disclaimer\* We are not veterinarians. Please consult with your vet before you change your dogs diet or give any over the counter medicines.

