

# *Prophylactic gastropexy*

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**Overview:** Gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV) is a life-threatening, rapidly progressive condition in which a dog's stomach dilates, often rotates, and the blood supply to the stomach and nearby spleen can be cut off. If untreated, the stomach can rupture, and the pet can die from shock or associated cardiac complications. A prophylactic gastropexy is a surgery performed in healthy animals (often at the time of a spay or neuter) in which the stomach is sutured to or around surrounding tissues to prevent it from rotating. This procedure helps prevent development of a GDV, though it does not prevent the stomach from dilating.

**Signs/symptoms:** A prophylactic gastropexy is an elective procedure performed in a healthy animal, so there are no "symptoms". Symptoms of a GDV (often called bloat) include non-productive vomiting or retching, dilating and/or painful abdomen, and eventually weakness or collapse.

**Diagnosis:** A prophylactic gastropexy is often recommended for dogs that are considered at risk for developing a GDV to prevent it from happening. Your veterinarian may suggest or recommend you consider a prophylactic gastropexy for your pet if your dog is a large breed, deep chested dog or is one of several breeds that is considered a "high risk" breed (including Great Danes, St. Bernards, Irish Setters, Weimaraners, and several others).

**Treatment:** There are several types of gastropexies that may be performed to prophylactically secure the stomach to the body wall to try to prevent a GDV from occurring. Most commonly, the surgery is performed through an abdominal incision, though a laparoscopic approach is an option in some areas.

**Aftercare/outcome:** In young, healthy animals, recovery from a prophylactic gastropexy should be fairly straightforward. Home care includes basic incision care, exercise restriction for the first 2 weeks, and administering pain killers and/or antibiotics.

It is still recommended in high risk breeds that some risk factors are avoided if possible even after this surgery. It is recommended that they be fed at least 2 meals daily (rather than one large meal/day) and that vigorous exercise be avoided just before or after eating.

*Please refer to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons website*

*[www.acvs.org](http://www.acvs.org) for additional information or call Dr. Boswell at 269-312-4227*