

Disc Disease & Paralysis
ALTERNATIVE VETERINARY MEDICINE CENTRE
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DISC DISEASE IN THE DOG

PIDD – IVDD – PID – IVD – Intervertebral Disc Disease – Prolapsed intervertebral disc – Thoracolumbar disc disease

What is it?

The term refers to any disease or abnormality of the intervertebral disc, ranging from loss of elasticity to rupture (prolapse). It can be an extremely painful and distressing problem and signs are often quite sudden in onset, with the dog becoming paralysed at the back end, in advanced cases. It can occur in almost any dog but is most common in Dachshunds.

It usually comes to our notice when a dog goes off its back legs, often showing severe back pain and, in extreme cases, losing the power to defaecate or urinate voluntarily.

The disc is the elastic cushion between the vertebrae of the spine, consisting of a tough elastic capsule surrounding a gelatinous pulpy material, allowing flexibility and shock absorption.

The capsule can become inelastic with this degenerative condition and, if it ruptures, the core pulp material will usually be forcibly ejected into the spinal canal, concussing the spinal cord. Secondary damage then occurs, on account of the consequent swelling and oedema.

The usual site of the first episode is at the junction between the thoracic and lumbar vertebrae. X-Ray pictures will usually reveal several other vertebrae in a state of degeneration.

In larger breeds, we may see a similar problem occurring in the neck.

Treatment

In conventional medicine, prompt treatment with steroids (cortisone, corticosteroids) is usually offered and, in cases exhibiting paralysis, surgery is often offered. The steroid is used to reduce the inflammation and swelling while the surgery is designed to remove some of the space-occupying extruded pulp material and to open the dorsal part of the spinal canal, to reduce the pressure. Of course, surgery must be highly skilled, since it needs to be extremely intricate, to avoid causing further damage to nerves and nerve function.

In alternative medicine, prompt intervention is again favoured but with carefully-integrated [acupuncture](#), [LASER](#) and [homeopathic](#) treatment. These treatments stimulate healing of the damaged structures, reduce pain, inflammation and swelling through the healing process and have resulted in a very good success rate, even in cases where bowel and bladder function have been impaired. We would expect reasonable recovery to occur and usually see virtually full recovery. In our experience, restoration of normal function and posture is less likely in cases that have already received spinal surgery.

At the **AVMC**, we do not recommend spinal surgery because of the intricacy involved, the strong possibility of further damage ensuing, the risk of anaesthesia, the long and painful recovery phase and because of the unpredictability of the effects of the inevitable consequent scarring. Another overpowering fact that persuades us down this route is the success record that has followed using a non-invasive, integrated alternative medicine approach.

Management

We would advise changing over to a [natural diet](#), to improve healing capability and quality of tissues. We would also advocate long-term homeopathic input, to support disc integrity and to reduce the likelihood of further discs following the same route, which is an ever-present risk in affected dogs.

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