

Golden Retriever Health Problems

Breed Group: Sporting

The Golden Retriever is playful, eager, alert and self-confident. Extremely friendly, reliable, and devoted, the Golden Retriever is an excellent companion dog.

Because they are so friendly to people, Golden Retrievers cannot make good guard dogs - they are "people dogs". They enjoy and thrive on human companionship and must be allowed to interact with people.

Besides being an excellent companion dog, the Golden Retriever is also a wonderful hunting dog, tracking dog, and field trial competitor. His gentle nature and reliable temperament also make him an excellent candidate to work as a guide dog for the blind, assistance dog for the disabled, and therapy dog.

Like all other breeds, Golden Retrievers are susceptible to certain health problems, some of a genetic nature, others viral.

Some of the more common Golden Retriever health problems include:

- Hip Dysplasia
- Elbow Dysplasia
- Bloat
- Allergy
- Epilepsy
- Hypothyroidism
- Heart Disease
- von Willebrand's Disease

Golden Retriever Health Problems – Hip Dysplasia

Hip dysplasia afflicts many dogs and over 15% of Golden Retrievers have this condition. Hip dysplasia is generally considered to be inherited, but over-vaccination and obesity are also possible causes. The condition ranges from just a slight abnormality in the hip joint to the actual dislocation of the joint.

Providing a natural diet, supplemented by chondroprotective medications (glucosamine and chondroitin) helps prevent and manage bone and joint problems.

Golden Retriever Health Problems – Elbow Dysplasia

Osteochondritis of the elbow (elbow dysplasia) is a hereditary disease (but may also be caused by poor nutrition or injury), characterized by the elbow joints of the front legs being malformed, due probably to different growth rates of the three bones making up the elbow.

Dogs with this condition usually display an obvious limp - they may hold the leg out from the body while walking, or even attempt to carry the front leg completely, putting no weight on it at all. Signs may be noted as early as four months of age.

Elbow dysplasia is a lifelong problem, although some dogs can be helped with surgery which, in some cases, can eliminate the problem totally.

Golden Retriever Health Problems – Bloat

Bloat, medically known as gastric dilatation and volvulus (GDV), is a serious and acute medical condition characterized by a rapid accumulation of gas in the stomach (gastric dilatation). In some cases, the distended stomach rotates on itself, resulting in a "twisted stomach" (volvulus), and the twisting can completely block entry of blood supply into the organ. Both conditions (dilatation and volvulus) are serious but volvulus is extremely critical and requires immediate medical attention.

Big breeds with deep chests (such as the Golden Retriever) are more susceptible to bloat. Symptoms include:

- Upper abdominal area becomes distended (feels like a tight drum)
- Excessive drooling, due most likely to pain
- Panting
- Unsuccessful attempts to vomit (the dog may desperately try to eat grass to induce vomiting)
- Retching
- Restlessness
- Rapid shallow breathing
- Gums may turn bluish or mud-colored (critical stage)

Golden Retriever Health Problems – Allergy

Golden Retrievers are prone to development of allergies in response to environmental allergens, such as house dust mite and pollens. Flea and other parasitic infections such as sarcoptic mange (scabies) can also cause allergic-type reactions.

Common signs of allergies are itching, sometimes with hair loss; foot licking and chewing, and recurrent ear infections.

Providing a natural diet and vaccinating only when necessary and for the fewest diseases helps prevent and manage immune problems, such as allergies.

Golden Retriever Health Problems – Epilepsy

Epilepsy is a chronic condition characterized by recurrent seizures. Epilepsy is a disease which is rather prevalent in Golden Retrievers. It can be hereditary but it can also be caused by:

- vaccinations
- poisoning
- low blood sugar
- brain tumors or brain injury
- thyroid problems
- liver disease
- kidney disease
- heat stroke

The symptoms vary in severity but the dog usually foams at the mouth and appears to be chewing on something. Then he will have violent muscle contractions, lose bladder or bowel control, and faint.

Golden Retriever Health Problems – Hypothyroidism

Golden Retrievers have a predisposition for hypothyroidism, a condition in which the body fails to produce sufficient amounts of thyroid hormone. Hypothyroidism can be caused by problems in the dog's own immune system, or it can be caused by certain medications, toxins, or even a lack of exercise. Symptoms are related to a slowed metabolism including mental dullness, exercise intolerance, lethargy, weight gain (without increase food consumption), hypothermia, dry skin, and hair loss.

Golden Retriever Health Problems – Heart Disease

One of the most common heart conditions seen in large breed dogs such as Golden Retrievers, aortic stenosis (AS) is a condition in which there is a partial obstruction to the flow of blood as it leaves the left side of the heart (the left ventricle) through the main blood vessel (the aorta) that carries blood to the rest of the body.

Because of the obstruction, the heart must work harder to push the blood through the opening and, over time, this can cause problems and even death.

Aortic stenosis is hard to detect but with moderate to severe stenosis, the Golden's heart may not be able to keep up with the body's demands during exercise. Therefore, the dog may show reduced exercise tolerance - he may seem to run out of steam, or he may even faint due to inadequate blood supply to the brain. Restricting the amount and intensity of exercise is necessary for Golden Retrievers with moderate to severe AS.

Golden Retriever Health Problems – von Willebrand's Disease

von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) is a common inherited blood disorder, characterized by a deficiency in clotting factor VIII antigen. This disorder afflicts Golden Retrievers quite often.

Dogs affected by this disease are more likely to have excessive bleeding episodes upon injury, and one main symptom of vWD is excessive bleeding. The dog may also develop nosebleeds or bleeding from the gums, or bleeding in the stomach or intestine. Sometimes some dogs may have blood in their urine.