

Dach-Facts: Back Injury (IVDD)

Health & Welfare Information from the
Dachshund Breed Council in association with DodgersList.com



**Dogs can live pain-free, happy lives after a
back injury**

www.dodgerslist.com

**Web site & email list group offering
education and support for owners and all
dogs suffering from disc disease**

DodgersList gathers information on current treatments and alternatives for Inter-vertebral Disc Disease (IVDD). Website information reflects what is commonly recommended by experts in neurology, orthopaedic and physical therapy fields. Many Dodger members have extensive experience with IVDD, which can be a problem in Dachshunds. As with any treatment or supplemental programme, there is no replacement for good, quality veterinary care.

Preventing injury

While there is not much that can be done to prevent actual disc disease, there are several things you can try to do to minimise the risk of injury:

- Regular exercise
 - Keep them sleek and streamlined, as Dachshunds were meant to be
 - Additional weight can put more stress on the spine
- Lift your Dachshund using two hands, one supporting the chest and one supporting the back
- It is essential to limit your Dachshund's use of stairs. Be very cautious in allowing them to jump on and off furniture, including beds

- The use of ramps is strongly encouraged
- Use a harness rather than a collar

Premature ageing of the disc

Dachshunds have a condition known as CHONDRODYSTROPHY - "chondro" means cartilage and "dystrophy" means disorder. Chondrodystrophy refers to the abnormal development of bone from a cartilage skeleton during growth from a puppy to an adult. The long bones of the body tend to be affected the most and this results in short limbs. It is "genetically programmed" in dwarf breeds such as Dachshunds.

Discs have an outer fibrous capsule (annulus) and inner gel nucleus. Discs degenerate with age in all animals – they lose water, become more fibrous and sometimes mineralised (calcified). The fibrous annulus can also rupture. Degeneration takes place much earlier in chondrodystrophic breeds, i.e. from 12-18 months, compared with 6-8 years in non-chondrodystrophic breeds.

Disc disease can and does happen at any age.

Predicting back problems

Sometimes, even though Dachshunds may not exhibit a back problem, radiographs (X-rays) may disclose disc calcification. It's important to note that radiographs do not always confirm the presence of a back problem and there is no proof at this time that calcifications mean IVDD.

Signs of disc problems and available treatments

Signs that may occur with cervical (neck) disc disease:

- Crying, when eating or drinking, or for no apparent reason
- Poor appetite due to pain (mainly due to difficulty in lowering head to eat)
- Muscle spasms, and reluctance to move due to pain
- One or both front legs could be lame

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Signs that may occur with (back) disc disease:

- Crying and/or shaking
- Reluctance to move, jump or to go up/down stairs
- Poor appetite due to pain
- Tense abdomen – called referred pain – can mimic the symptoms of other diseases
- Hunched appearance
- Paralysis to rear legs
- Loss of bladder and bowel control – severe signs of disc disease

WHEN YOU OBSERVE ANY OF THESE SIGNS, GET YOUR DACHSHUND TO A VETERINARY SURGEON IMMEDIATELY.

Time is of the essence and could make a difference as to whether the problem can be corrected. You may opt for surgery, in which case a myelogram or MRI can be done to determine the location and extent of the disc rupture. Based on our experience, many if not most of the dogs who have surgery soon after becoming paralysed, have more rapid and complete recoveries than dogs who have surgery at a later time. If surgery is to be considered, it should be done as soon as possible after the injury, ideally within 12-24 hours. If a dog is paralysed but still has deep pain sensations, surgery can often result in a complete recovery or a reasonably good recovery with minor neurological deficits. Discuss this with your vet. Surgeries are better performed by a specialist, (either a neurologist or a consultant surgeon). You may need a referral from your vet to a specialist. We recommend a consultation with a specialist whenever possible.

Alternatives to surgery

- Rest and anti-inflammatory medication
 - **Always discuss new medications with your vet, including benefits, risks, side effects, and any required laboratory monitoring**
- Acupuncture treatments
- Hydrotherapy and towel walking after healing has taken place and approved by

your vet and under the supervision of a chartered physiotherapist

Canine Rehabilitation

Whether your Dachshund has surgery or your surgeon or neurologist determines that surgery isn't warranted, your Dachshund will benefit from rehabilitation by a qualified canine rehabilitation therapist (either a Chartered Physio-Therapist or Veterinary Surgeon). Services are available by referral from your specialist or vet. Canine rehabilitation consists of a thorough evaluation and a progressive treatment plan that addresses strength, range of motion, pain or diskomfort, balance, coordination, quality of mobility and walking, and overall function. The therapy plan is continually re-evaluated, updated and follows all restrictions set by the referral source. The therapy plan may consist of balance, coordination and strengthening exercises, manual therapies, gait retraining, acupuncture, joint mobilisation, and modalities such as laser, muscle stimulation, swimming or underwater treadmill.

Cage Rest is critical

At the first sign of a back problem and during recovery, confine your dog in a very small space using a small crate. Place the crate in an area of the house where the dog feels a part of the family. When going outside, place a small wire crate on the ground with the bottom removed. You can also use an exercise pen folded up to 3' x 3' or be sure the dog is taken out on a leash. 6-8 weeks of cage rest is recommended.

There is hope!

There are a variety of treatments available so do not give up hope if your dog develops signs of back problems. Historically, most dogs can live pain-free, happy lives after a back injury.

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Useful websites

Education:

www.gcvs.com/surgery/interver.htm

www.lbah.com/canine/ivd.htm

www-hsc.usc.edu/~bjmcmil/back.html

<http://www.dachshund-dca.org/discbook.html>

Supplements & Equipment:

www.altvetmed.org

www.handicappedpets.com

www.naturalrearing.com

Dachshund Rescue

If an owner is unable to care for a disabled Dachshund, our Dachshund Rescue group may be able to help.

Where to find out more

Visit www.Dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk for fuller details plus the latest information and advice.

Visit DodgersList at:

www.dodgerslist.com

Acknowledgements

The Dachshund Breed Council is grateful to Linda Stowe, founder of DodgersList, for permission to reproduce much of the the content of their information brochure on IVDD for use here in the UK.

Disclaimer

This information is presented for educational purposes and as a resource for the Dachshund community. The Dachshund Breed Council and DodgersList coordinators are not vets or health care professionals. Nothing herein should be interpreted as medical advice and you should contact your pet care professionals for advice. The Dachshund Breed Council and DodgersList coordinators are not responsible for the substance and content contained herein and do not advocate any particular product, item or position contained herein.

The information in this leaflet has also been reviewed by a UK veterinary surgeon who specialises in canine orthopaedics.