

bvsc & Your Pet
THE ANIMAL HOSPITAL + THE SPECIALIST CLINIC



Treating
Intervertebral Disc Disease
(IVDD)



At BVSC the well-being of your much loved pet is our priority and we are committed to giving the very best care possible. We have specialist veterinarians and nurses who have dedicated their careers to helping animals. Here is some information to help you understand IVDD.

+ Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD)

Intervertebral disc disease is unfortunately a common disease seen in certain dog breeds (chondrodystrophic breeds). Unfortunately Dachshunds are at risk to developing this condition. IVDD is caused by accelerated disc degeneration at an early age which can lead to extrusion or protrusion of the degenerated disc into the spinal canal causing bruising and compression of the spinal cord. This can occur in the cervical spine (neck), thoracolumbar spine (middle back) and lumbar (lower back) spine. IVDD occurs most commonly in the thoracolumbar region and the following is a summary of information about IVDD in this location.

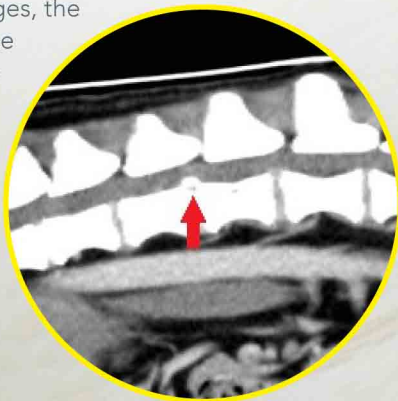
+ What are the signs?

Clinical signs shown by a dog affected by IVDD vary depending on the severity of the lesion. Serious signs can involve paralysis in the back legs, or having a wobbly gait when walking. Mild signs related to back pain can be quite vague and can include a change in behaviour. These may include: not wanting to jump up on furniture or use the stairs, sudden cries of pain, walking with a hunched back, having a very tense belly and muscle tremors.

+ How is IVDD diagnosed?

Conventional radiographs (X-rays) of the spine may miss the diagnosis of IVDD. A myelogram (injection of contrast into the space around the spinal cord with X-rays taken) or advanced imaging with CT or MRI will be required to confirm the diagnosis.

On these CT images, the red arrows indicate the extruded disc within the spinal canal causing compression of the spinal cord. As a comparison, the smaller image depicts what a normal spine looks like.



+ How do we treat IVDD?

The two main treatment options for IVDD are surgery or conservative management. Both treatments involve a long period (6-8 weeks) of crate rest for activity restriction which can be difficult for active dogs. The goal of surgery is to decompress the spinal cord by removing the disc within the canal. This is performed by creating a small window (hemilaminectomy) in the vertebra where the affected disc is. Surgery is usually recommended when your dog is unable to walk, or if there is uncontrollable pain.

Conservative management is similar to the surgery aftercare as discussed below.

+ Aftercare & Prognosis

If your pet has had surgery, the aftercare period is important and can be quite intensive. Strict crate rest and activity restriction (up to 8 weeks) is crucial to prevent any complications. Pain relief and anti-inflammatory medications are provided to ensure that your pet is comfortable. Physiotherapy is also recommended to maximise recovery.

Prognosis for return to acceptable function post surgery is >90% for dogs who retain deep pain sensation (able to feel bone pain). If they do lose deep pain perception, prognosis drops to approximately 60%.

If concerned, you should present your pet to a veterinarian immediately for an assessment. If this occurs during out-of-business hours, an emergency critical care visit is highly recommended. If surgery is required, a referral to one of our specialist surgeons will be required as most local veterinary practices are not equipped to perform spinal surgery.



OUR MISSION is to provide expert medical care to our animals, in a supportive, respectful, compassionate and collaborative environment.

+ About BVSC

Brisbane Veterinary Specialist Centre (BVSC) is a purpose built, state of the art veterinary facility providing outstanding modern medical and surgical equipment. BVSC works very closely with Brisbane Veterinary Emergency and Critical Care Services (BVECCS) providing 24/7 veterinary care.

BVSC has a modern CT scanner which provides excellent detailed images for use in the diagnosis of IVDD. We also perform high-field MRI at a research facility nearby when this type of advanced imaging is indicated

The surgery team, lead by board certified specialists at BVSC, are passionate and experienced in the field of IVDD. They work alongside a qualified animal physiotherapist to maximise your pet's recovery from IVDD. BVSC also operates a hyperbaric oxygen chamber to provide hyperbaric oxygen therapy which can be helpful for patients with spinal cord injury.

BVSC is a referral hospital so ask your veterinarian for a referral if you would like to make an appointment.

For further information on Intervertebral Disc Disease (IVDD), please contact any of our experienced surgeons at BVSC on 07 3264 9400.

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