



## Collapsing Trachea

### Diagnostic Plan

History  
Physical examination  
Tracheal palpation  
Chest auscultation  
Chest X-rays  
Tracheoscopy  
Cultures of tracheal wash fluid

### Therapeutic Plan

Activity restriction  
Corticosteroids  
Steam vaporization  
Bronchodilators  
Antitussives  
Antibacterials  
Surgery

### Nutritional Plan

If surgery is performed, nutrition adequate for tissue repair  
If obesity is a complicating factor, restrict caloric intake so the patient reaches and maintains an ideal body weight

## Collapsing Trachea

Your pet has a collapsing trachea. Collapsing tracheas occur most often in small dogs. These dogs usually have a chronic “honking” cough. Treatment consists of weight reduction, sedatives and drugs that dilate the air passages. This client education sheet will help you learn more about this condition and will review your veterinarian’s instructions for your pet’s care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

### What You Should Know About Collapsing Trachea

The trachea, or windpipe, is a tube that carries air from the mouth to the lungs. It is composed of rings that normally have a circular shape. A collapsing trachea is a flattening or narrowing of these rings. This narrowing can occur in the throat or chest or both. A collapsing trachea impairs your pet’s ability to breathe.

#### Causes

The cause of collapsing trachea is unknown. Congenital forms have been recognized – a finding that suggests that collapsing trachea may be hereditary in some dogs. High pressure from disease processes in the lower lung can create or worsen a potential collapsing trachea as well.

Environmental factors such as heat or humidity may exacerbate clinical signs. Collapsing trachea can also be made worse by obesity or excitement.

#### Diagnosis

A history of a chronic honking cough in small, often overweight, dogs is very suggestive of collapsing trachea. The cough can usually be elicited when your veterinarian palpates (examines by touching) your pet’s throat. X-rays of the throat and chest will often reveal a narrowed trachea. Tracheal or lung cultures for bacteria may be warranted in some cases.

## Treatment and Home Care

Most cases respond favorably to weight loss, rest and medications. These medications include: sedatives; drugs that widen the air passages; expectorants, which break up the mucus in the lungs; and anti-tussives to relieve the coughing. Antibiotics may help if a bacterial infection is complicating the collapsing trachea. Several procedures exist for surgically correcting a collapsing trachea, but surgery is usually reserved for cases where medications fail.

Home care consists of giving all prescribed medications and eliminating, when possible, the activities that induce coughing spells. Your veterinarian may also recommend use of a harness instead of a collar for your dog.

## Nutritional Plan

If your pet has a collapsing trachea, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, the clinical signs and the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. If your pet is overweight, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. Weight loss is a primary objective for treating collapsing trachea in obese patients. The best food for reducing weight is a nutritionally complete and balanced high-fiber, low-fat, low-calorie food, such as Hill's® Prescription Diet® r/d® Canine Weight Loss-Low Calorie. Once your pet's weight returns to normal, your next goal is to maintain this correct weight by feeding a reduced-calorie, high-fiber food to help prevent the recurrence of obesity. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® w/d® Canine Low Fat-Diabetic-Gastrointestinal.

After your pet is treated for collapsing trachea, your veterinarian may recommend another dietary change. Optimal nutrition for middle-aged and older pets, such as those with collapsing trachea, provides for the pet's needs, but more importantly reduces the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, calcium, phosphorus, protein and calories. Dog foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition include Hill's® Science Diet® Mature Adult Active Longevity™ Original and Hill's® Prescription Diet® g/d® Canine Early Cardiac-Healthy Aging and Prescription Diet® k/d® Canine Renal Health.

## Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

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## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.