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The Danger of Water Intoxication

Swimming dogs are at risk of ingesting too much water

JoAnna Lou | May 28, 2012



Last week a friend's dog had a close call with water intoxication. Her crew was playing in a local river when one of her Border Collies emerged staggering and vomiting liquid.

Symptoms quickly worsened on the way to the vet, but after a few harrowing days, the dog was fortunate to make a full recovery.

Apparently the poor pup ingested too much water while repeatedly diving into the river, mouth open, trying to catch a ball. Drinking too much causes electrolyte levels to drop, thinning blood plasma and leading to swelling of the brain and other organs.

Before I learned about water intoxication, I thought that playing in the lake was safe if your dog was a strong swimmer. But now I know to be mindful of how my guys interact with the water and to force them to take ample breaks. Dogs can even drink too much

water from playing with a lawn sprinkler.

Unfortunately water intoxication progresses quickly. Now that summer is officially here, it's important to review the signs so you can get an affected dog to the vet as soon as possible.

Symptoms include lack of coordination, lethargy, nausea, bloating, vomiting, dilated pupils, glazed eyes, light gum color, and excessive salivation. Advanced symptoms include difficulty breathing, collapsing, loss of consciousness, and seizures.

As the weather gets warmer, stay safe. Water intoxication can affect both people and our pups.

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Photo by sharper65/flickr.

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**Kyla Boyer** • 2 years ago

Best thing to do when playing with your water loving dog is keep the rule 15mins play30mins rest etc. This will allow the body to process the excess water safely. BUT in the chance that your dog has ingested too much water that even a rest isn't helping, be SURE to know the symptoms and GET TO A VET IMMEDIATELY!!!!!!! Water intoxication is REAL and affects any and all breeds. Still enjoy the lakes, rivers and pools with your dog, just remember that they have to be MADE to take a rest and dry off. Like with just about everything in life, too much is not a good thing. Dogs don't know when to say 'ok, I just need a minute' so we need to step in and say 'go lay down. Your on a break'.

3 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

**Flo'tje** • 2 years ago

Our 2 year old Toller actually died of this! It was over really quickly, within two hours of stopping the swimming he died... We just thought he was tired because of al the activity... It was all very sudden, and even the vet didnt know what she was looking at when we brought him in. Later it became evident that it was water intoxication, but he was too far gone by then. The brain had already swollen up and he was having seizures.

Some tips we like to give after this experience:

- Definitely take a few breaks in between! We always walked durring swimming sessions but make them take an actual break from the water.

- Get a toy to throw in the water that they can close their mouth with. A ball might simply be too big and cause the dog to swallow a lot of water because he can't close his mouth!

- Take a snack with you! Something like a banana, it is really good for them and it will give them a little extra nutrients.

BUT I wish everyone happy swimming times with their beloved pooch! It is still the best exercise to give to your dog and also just plain fun! Be safe everyone!

2 ^ | v • Reply • Share >

**Cathy Farmer** → Flo'tje • 10 months ago

I'm sorry you had to experience this. At first I mistook the word Toller for toddler. But thanks for sharing this info.

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**Kitty** • 2 years ago

I lost my sister to heat stroke, and that basically sounds like the same thing.. it was 115 in the shade the day Sue died. She had been drinking a lot of water, but had not touched the Gatorade that she had in her truck. Had she had that, she would probably still be alive today. When you ingest large quantities of water, it flushes the electrolytes out of your body. The electrolytes are what carry messages throughout our bodies to the brain. When they are depleted, our bodies basically shut down.

Sue and I were camping once with our horses up in the Sierra Mountains, a neighboring camper's horse suddenly dropped to the ground and was not going to make it.. we were a few hours from a vet. VERY luckily my sister's friend was visiting us and had experience with this and she also carried a large supply of emergency medical equipment.. she ordered us to run to the camp store and buy all the Gatorade they had immediately. She tubed the horse and poured all of the Gatorade we had into her. It was miraculous, within 30 minutes after treatment the horse was back on her feet.

I think what I will do personally is to keep energy drinks with me in case this happens.

Perhaps even let our Golden drink some as a precautionary measure. A bit won't hurt him. I am going to the lake next weekend for the first time with him, he is a new rescue, and I don't want to talk any chances.

Thank you for the article, this would never have occurred to me before but it makes perfect sense!

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**Gabriel Thompson** → Kitty • 10 months ago