

# Kennel Cough

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**Infectious Canine Tracheobronchitis**, more commonly known as Kennel Cough, is a contagious disease that affects the respiratory system. Like similar illnesses in people, it can be caused by a variety of organisms.

**How Dogs Get Kennel Cough** Kennel cough is spread mainly by airborne viruses and bacteria expelled when infected dogs cough. People can inadvertently spread it on their hands, shoes, or inanimate objects.

The organisms most often implicated in cases of Kennel cough are *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, Canine Para influenza Virus, and Canine Adenovirus. Kennel cough spreads readily in places where many dogs are housed in close confinement, such as kennels, animal shelters, grooming parlors, and dog shows.

Not every dog exposed to the organisms that cause Kennel Cough will get sick. Stress, health status, and respiratory irritants like dust or smoke also play a role.

**What the Disease Does** Most dogs with Kennel Cough are only mildly ill. The main symptom is a dry, hacking cough, sometimes accompanied by poor appetite. Most dogs recover within a few weeks. However, very young or highly stressed dogs can get seriously ill, progressing to bronchopneumonia. They may have a fever, greenish nasal discharge, and a productive cough.

**How Kennel Cough is Diagnosed** Diagnosis is based on medical history and physical examination. Dogs with this illness usually cough when the windpipe is palpated. Accurate information about vaccination history is valuable, because the veterinarian must make sure that coughing is not caused by Canine Distemper.

**Treatment for Kennel Cough** Dogs with mild illness may not require treatment, but cough suppressants and anti-inflammatories can help them feel more comfortable. More severe infections are treated with antibiotics and bronchodilators.

**Preventing Kennel Cough** The combination vaccination routinely given to all dogs gives partial protection against two of the organisms that cause Kennel Cough, Canine Para influenza Virus and Canine Adenovirus. Dogs at higher risk include show dogs and those that are boarded or groomed professionally. They should be given a comprehensive Kennel Cough vaccine. One dose of vaccine is given initially, and is safe for puppies as young as two weeks old. Re-vaccination is recommended annually, although some boarding facilities require more frequent boosters. Both injectable and intranasal (nose drops) vaccines are available. The intranasal type is more effective, but the injectable type is helpful for dogs that don't tolerate nose drops. The injectable vaccine requires two doses initially. Vaccinated dogs sometimes still get Kennel Cough, but the vaccine reduces its severity.

Dogs with Kennel Cough should be isolated from other dogs since the disease is contagious. Contaminated objects should be disinfected with a dilute bleach solution. It is possible, although uncommon in household situations, for *Bordetella bronchiseptica* to be passed to cats, rabbits, and guinea pigs.