



Guide Dogs for the Blind

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Diarrhea Recommendations for Puppies 8 weeks to 8 months old

FAQs

Note: These recommendations are GDB's preferred approach to managing puppy diarrhea. However, a local veterinarian may advise a different plan based on a puppy's specific needs.

GENERAL FAQs:

1. Why do puppies get diarrhea?

Puppies often experience a few days of soft stools or diarrhea when they have new life experiences. Leaving the GDB campus, traveling, and getting to know a new puppy raiser home are all big events for a puppy. When this type of diarrhea occurs, it typically resolves in 4-5 days as a puppy adjusts to their environment. Even though this is considered self-resolving diarrhea, a few days of a bland diet and fiber supplement may help.

Another common reason for diarrhea in young puppies is that their intestines are still immature, and they are having difficulty digesting their puppy diet. The treatment for this is to feed a diet that works with their growing intestinal tract. This may require trying 2-3 prescription veterinary diets to find the right diet for the puppy. This is called food-responsive diarrhea, and it is different from a food allergy. Puppies that experience food-responsive diarrhea will need a special diet for a few weeks, or sometimes a few months, but almost all puppies are able to successfully transition to a regular puppy diet after 6 months of age.

Only a small percentage of GDB puppies have diarrhea caused by an infection or parasite. GDB puppies receive Heartgard Plus which provides a monthly deworming. However, screening fecal tests are advised if diarrhea does not resolve with a bland diet.

Lastly, a small number of puppies have a condition called antibiotic-responsive diarrhea. These puppies require both a supportive diet and an antibiotic medication to resolve the diarrhea. It's important to only treat diarrhea with antibiotics when a veterinarian determines it's truly needed. Antibiotics can have a negative impact on the puppies' intestinal microbiome for months to years, which can impede a puppy's health and guide dog training.

Self-resolving diarrhea and food-responsive diarrhea are the most common types of puppy diarrhea, which is why GDB recommends trying a veterinary gastrointestinal diet (such as Purina EN, Hill's i/d, or Royal Canin Gastrointestinal Puppy), psyllium, and probiotics. If the diarrhea persists, we commonly recommend trying Royal Canin HP puppy, a hypoallergenic food, before treating with antibiotics.

2. How can I share this information with my local veterinarian?

In your Diarrhea Kit packet there is a double-sided information sheet for local veterinarians. Please give this sheet to the local veterinarian when a puppy has an exam for diarrhea. This sheet summarizes GDB's preferred approach to puppy diarrhea.

3. What is recommended for diarrhea if a dog is 9 months or older?

Begin following the puppy diarrhea flow chart in the Diarrhea Kit packet. If the diarrhea persists, schedule a veterinary exam. However, contact VFA if the veterinarian recommends starting a Royal Canin HP Puppy diet trial. Older puppies need VFA to closely monitor their response to a

hypoallergenic diet and transition back to regular food prior to recall. Puppies eating a prescription diet cannot be recalled.

4. Are soft, formed stools considered diarrhea?

This diarrhea treatment plan is only recommended for puppies that have stools with no shape or form. This includes “cowpie” (#6) and “liquid” (#7) diarrhea (based on the [Purina Fecal Score Chart](#)). Sometimes growing puppies have intermittent soft but formed stools (#4 or #5). If soft, formed stools are consistently observed over several days, GDB recommends transitioning to a different over-the-counter GDB approved puppy diet, as this may improve the stool quality. GDB commonly recommends trying Eukanuba Large Breed Puppy, because the adult version of this diet is fed when dogs return to campus for training.

5. When should I NOT follow this plan?

Do NOT follow this plan if a puppy has signs of a more concerning illness such as a large amount of blood in stool, vomiting more than three times in a day, fever, lethargy, unusual whining, inappetence, drooling, toxin exposure, or possible/known dietary indiscretion. If you see any of these signs or think the puppy ate something they shouldn't have, contact your local veterinarian first.

FEEDING FAQs:

6. How do raisers get more Purina EN?

Ask your leader if they have a supply of Purina EN. If they do not, please order a 16.5lb bag from Chewy.com, or your local vet if they have examined the puppy. During the 1-3 day wait for shipping from Chewy.com, sometimes raisers in the same club will have extra supplies they can share, or you can feed a home cooked diet (recipe below).

Chewy.com will require a veterinarian's authorization. You can enter your local veterinarian's information if they previously examined the puppy and you have contacted them about the diarrhea. Alternatively, you can enter GDB's VFA contact information for the prescription food authorization. For detailed steps on ordering, see instructions for

- [Instructions for Purchasing Purina EN from Chewy.com](#)

7. How much of the special diet do I feed the puppy?

Start by feeding roughly the same number of calories you were feeding with the regular diet and **monitor the puppy's body condition**. If the puppy digests the new diet better, the puppy may absorb more nutrition from the same number of calories. Keep a close eye on the puppy's [Body Condition Score](#) and adjust accordingly. Reach out to your leader if you need help.

Below is a general guide, but checking the food label is best since pet food formulations and calorie amounts can change.

For every 1 cup of Purina Pro Plan Puppy Large Breed Chicken & Rice (419 kcal per cup) feed:

- 1 cup of Purina EN (397 kcal per cup)
- 1 cup of Royal Canin HP Puppy (375 kcal per cup)

Home cooked diets can be fed for 3-5 days only.

- Feed 4 cups total per day for a maximum of 3-5 days
- Each cup of the home cooked diet contains:
 - ¼ cup boneless, skinless chicken breast OR ¼ cup low fat cottage cheese
 - ¾ cup cooked white rice
- To cook the chicken breast – boil until fully cooked with no seasoning, flavors, or oils.

8. Are Purina EN and Royal Canin HP Puppy appropriate diets for large breed puppy growth?

Yes, Purina EN and Royal Canin HP Puppy diets are approved for puppy growth in large breeds.

Royal Canin HP Puppy is labeled for puppies 6 months and older. However, veterinary nutrition experts at UC Davis advise that it is healthy for GDB puppies less than 6 months old to be fed Royal Canin HP Puppy for 2 months followed by a 2-week transition back to their regular diet.

9. Do I need to do a diet transition when starting Purina EN or Royal Canin HP Puppy?

No, you can start feeding either special diet without a diet transition.

10. Are there any other gastrointestinal diets I can feed?

Yes, all of the following bland diets can be fed to GDB puppies with diarrhea:

- Purina EN
- Royal Canin Gastrointestinal Puppy
- Hill's i/d
- Purina HA Salmon (Purina HA chicken and vegetarian are not formulated for puppy growth)
- Royal Canin HP Puppy
- Home cooked skinless, boneless chicken OR low-fat cottage cheese and cooked white rice (ONLY for 3-5 days at most)

11. If the stools become normal with the special diet, how long do I feed it?

- If the diarrhea resolved after 2-3 days with the supplies from the GDB Diarrhea Kit:
 - Continue the bland diet, psyllium, and probiotics for 48 more hours
 - Then transition back to the puppy's regular diet over 3 days:

Example of a 3-day transition
$\frac{3}{4}$ bland diet + $\frac{1}{4}$ new kibble for 1 day
$\frac{1}{2}$ bland diet + $\frac{1}{2}$ new kibble for 1 day
$\frac{1}{4}$ bland diet + $\frac{3}{4}$ new kibble for 1 day

- Home cooked skinless, boneless chicken breast OR low-fat cottage cheese and cooked white rice diet:
 - ONLY feed a homecooked diet for 3-5 days, then feed a veterinary bland diet, such as Purina EN, or a regular GDB approved puppy diet to ensure the puppy receives balanced nutrition.
- If the puppy needed additional support beyond the GDB Diarrhea Kit to resolve the diarrhea, then GDB recommends a slower transition back to a regular puppy diet.
 - Feed the special bland diet (i.e. Purina EN or Royal Canin HP Puppy) until stools are normal for one month. When $\frac{1}{4}$ of the food bag remains, transition to a regular GDB approved puppy food over 7-12 days.

Example of a 7-day transition	Example of a 12-day transition
$\frac{3}{4}$ bland diet + $\frac{1}{4}$ new kibble for 2 days	$\frac{3}{4}$ bland diet + $\frac{1}{4}$ new kibble for 4 days
$\frac{1}{2}$ bland diet + $\frac{1}{2}$ new kibble for 3 days	$\frac{1}{2}$ bland diet + $\frac{1}{2}$ new kibble for 4 days
$\frac{1}{4}$ bland diet + $\frac{3}{4}$ new kibble for 2 days	$\frac{1}{4}$ bland diet + $\frac{3}{4}$ new kibble for 4 days

12. What do I do if diarrhea returns during the transition?

If the diarrhea returns during the transition, go back to feeding 100% of the bland diet the puppy was eating when the stools were normal. Update your leader about the recurring diarrhea during the transition. GDB generally recommends continuing to feed the commercial bland diet (NOT home-

cooked) until the stools have been normal (#5 or better) for one month. Then transition the puppy to a different regular puppy diet from the GDB approved puppy food list. Your leader may also contact VFA to get an extended authorization to feed the prescription bland diet longer. Some puppies need 6-12 weeks on a special diet before transitioning to a regular diet.

PSYLLIUM FAQs:

13. How much psyllium do I give the puppy?

Starting psyllium dose:

Puppies under 30lb - Add ½ teaspoon to moistened food twice daily

Puppies over 30lb - Add 1 teaspoon to moistened food twice daily

- If the puppy will not eat the psyllium on the kibble, an alternative is to mix the psyllium with a little applesauce (**check label carefully and avoid applesauce with artificial sweeteners like xylitol that are toxic to dogs**) and give as a side dish at the same time as the normal meal.

Psyllium dose adjustments:

- If stools improve on the psyllium, but diarrhea is not resolved after 2-3 days, adjust the psyllium dose to the following:
 - Puppies under 30lb – Add 1 teaspoon to food twice daily
 - Puppies over 30lb - Add 1.5 teaspoons to food twice daily
- Additional increases should only be given if recommended by a veterinarian or VFA.
- NOTE: stools may look and feel gelatinous, this is a normal effect of the psyllium

14. Where do I get psyllium?

Psyllium is provided in the GDB Diarrhea Kit. Psyllium is also readily available at grocery stores, pharmacies (like CVS and Rite Aid), or online. It is important to purchase psyllium husk powder. Make sure psyllium husk is the only ingredient. **Do NOT give a dog psyllium that is flavored or “sugar free”. Artificial sweeteners like xylitol are toxic to dogs.**

15. What are possible side effects of psyllium?

Psyllium is a safe and generally well tolerated by dogs. It is important to have plenty of fresh water available, as the puppy may drink more. Also, drinking water prevents the psyllium from causing an intestinal blockage. **It is common for the stools to look or feel gelatinous, because the psyllium binds up excess water in the stool.** If frequent flatulence occurs, reduce the psyllium dose by ½ tsp twice daily.

16. When do I stop the psyllium?

GDB generally recommends continuing the psyllium while transitioning to a regular puppy diet, then tapering the psyllium over one week.

Sometimes a veterinarian or the VFA team may recommend a puppy continue a prescription diet for several months to give the puppy's intestines time to mature. In these cases, psyllium may be discontinued as long as the stools are normal on the special diet. In general, we recommend tapering off the psyllium after stools have been normal for at least one week. However, a veterinarian may recommend a different plan based on a puppy's individual needs. If the diarrhea returns after stopping the psyllium, restart the psyllium and notify the veterinarian and/or your leader.

PROBIOTIC FAQs:

17. What are GDB approved probiotics?

GDB has approved Fortiflora, Provable, and Visbiome because we are confident in the quality of these probiotics. There are many probiotics on the market, however, most companies do not have adequate research data to show their product is effective.

18. What are possible side effects of probiotics?

Probiotics are generally safe and well tolerated by dogs. Occasionally flatulence may be observed. If vomiting or worsening diarrhea occurs, please stop the probiotic and contact a veterinarian.

19. How much Fortiflora do I give the puppy?

Fortiflora dose:

Puppies under 30lb - Add ½ packet on a meal once a day for 10 days.

Puppies over 30lb - Add 1 packet on a meal once a day for 10 days.

If the diarrhea worsens or shows no improvement after 1 week of taking the probiotic, GDB generally recommends discontinuing the probiotic. The puppy's veterinarian may adjust this recommendation.

FECAL TESTING & MEDICATION FAQs:**20. What type of fecal testing does GDB recommend?**

GDB recommends a fecal float with centrifugation and Giardia ELISA test for all cases of diarrhea that have not resolved after 5 days of a bland diet.

A diarrhea PCR panel is only recommended if the diarrhea still hasn't resolved after feeding Royal Canin HP Puppy for at least 5 days. If a puppy is eating Royal Canin HP and the diarrhea persists, GDB supports veterinarians treating a puppy with a course of antibiotics prior to performing a diarrhea PCR panel.

21. Is deworming medication recommended even if the fecal is negative?

If a fecal is negative, deworming medication is not necessary. The monthly Heartgard dose already delivers regular deworming.

22. What is GDB's recommended treatment for Giardia?

GDB generally treats Giardia with a 5-day course of Panacur (fenbendazole). Feeding a commercial bland diet (Hill's i/d, Purina EN, or Royal Canin Gastrointestinal Puppy) is recommended until the stools have been normal for at least a week.

23. Why is a fecal test needed if a puppy is vomiting and has hives/facial swelling?

Coccidia is an intestinal parasite that can cause vomiting and hives/facial swelling in our dogs. Dogs with coccidia may or may not have diarrhea. A fecal float with centrifugation is used to test a dog for coccidia. GDB treats coccidia with either Albon (sulfadimethoxine) or Ponazuril.

24. Why is tylosin (Tylan) recommended instead of metronidazole (Flagyl)?

GDB prefers choosing tylosin because it may have less of a long-term impact on the puppy's natural intestinal bacteria (the microbiome). Also, tylosin is not used in human medicine, and it is preferable to use antibiotics that are less likely to create antibiotic resistant bacteria for people. Not all veterinarians have tylosin in stock, so metronidazole is an appropriate alternative when necessary.

25. If the local veterinarian recommends a fecal transplant, does GDB approve this treatment?

Fecal transplants are an emerging treatment for diarrhea and are currently not available at most vet clinics. Veterinarians are still learning how to best use this therapy for diarrhea treatment. Diet therapy (Purina EN and Royal Canin HP) should always be the first treatments for puppies with diarrhea. After feeding both diets, if a local veterinarian recommends a fecal transplant before trying antibiotics, GDB supports this recommendation.