

<http://sidneyme.blogspot.com/>

Sidney, chocolate lab, with congenital ME is Honored with the Ceremonial Puck Drop at the Lake Erie Monsters Hockey Club. Sidney is 3 1/2 years old and doing Great!



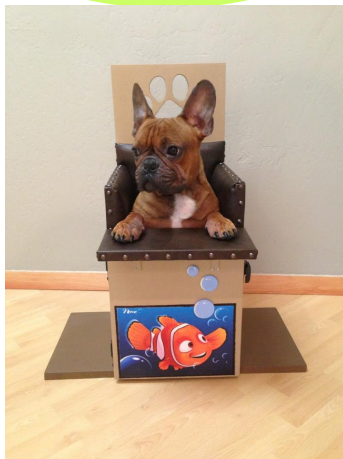
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# What You Should Know About ME

**Fact #1** Megaesophagus is **NOT** a death sentence

**Fact #2** It can be managed with Upright Feedings and nutritional modifications.

**Fact #3** Megaesophagus dogs can live a long and happy life.

**Fact #4** Megaesophagus is NOT rare. There are thousands of puppies born with this condition every year. Many of them are euthanized by breeders simply because they can't be sold. Many puppies born with ME do outgrow it later on in life. Some puppies are born with a birth defect known as PRAA (Persistent Right Aortic Arch). There is a surgery to correct it.

**Fact #5** Megaesophagus can be acquired or idiopathic (unknown) in older dogs. Underlying causes of Megaesophagus should always be sought out. Such diseases that can cause ME are Myasthenia Gravis, Addison's Disease and Hypothyroidism. Simple blood test are administered to determine if a dog has these diseases.

**Fact #6** If your dog is diagnosed with ME, you are not alone! There are thousands of dedicated pet owners just like you that are willing to help you through the journey. Come join our Facebook group, with 1300 + members worldwide and counting, for support, recipes and ideas on how to help your dog.

## How Do I Know My Dog Has ME?

**Megaesophagus** is basically an enlarged or stretched esophagus (tube that carries food from the mouth to the stomach). The muscles in the esophagus that are responsible for pushing food along do not work properly because the nerves that control them are partially or completely paralyzed. A dog's esophagus runs parallel to the floor. Because the esophagus muscles are weak or nonfunctioning, whatever the dog eats or drinks can pool in the esophagus stretching the esophagus further and potentially creating pouches or pockets. These pockets collect food and water, where they will remain until the dog regurgitates them.

### Signs and Symptoms:

Is your dog having difficulty eating? Does she regurgitate her food? Regurgitation is different than vomiting. When a dog regurgitates, it is usually quiet and the food comes out looking a lot like it went in. Vomiting is different. The dog will haunch over and retch digested or partial digested food and there usually is a lot of noise associated with the action.

**Aspiration Pneumonia.** When a dog regurgitates some of the food, water or saliva can go into the lungs. This causes an infection known as Aspiration Pneumonia or AP. It is imperative that your dog be seen right away by your vet if you suspect AP.

Common symptoms of pneumonia in dogs includes the dog showing signs of having trouble breathing, not drinking water or eating, not playing, incessant panting and sometimes a fever. Also, look for other signs of difficulty breathing, such as the dog pushing his or her lips out when breathing heavily.

## How Can I Help My ME Dog?

**# 1 Feed your Dog Upright in a "Bailey Chair"** After feedings, have your dog remain upright in the chair for at least 15-20 minutes.

**# 2 Food Consistency.** This takes some trial and error to get right. Some dogs do well with a slurry or milkshake consistency. Some do fine with soaked kibble and some do better with food shaped in little meatballs. Most ME dogs can not lap water and their water is added to their food. There are several recipes you can try to add nutrition and weight to your dog, like "satin balls" or try adding coconut milk or "Ensure" to their food..

**# 3 Smaller more frequent meals.**

**# 4 Try a "Pro Collar" or "Neck Hug".** This elevates your dog's head off the floor when they are laying down. Saliva often pools in their esophagus and this helps move the saliva down. You can find them at PetSmart or Petco and also at [www.wagtailfarms.com](http://www.wagtailfarms.com).

**# 5 Your Vet may prescribe an antacid** like Prilosec, Zantac or Pepcid to help with stomach acid. Your vet may prescribe a **motility drug** like Reglan or Cisapride.

## Come Join the Conversation!

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