



Pancreatitis

Definition and Causes:

The pancreas is an important organ involved in producing essential digestive enzymes and hormones such as insulin. Pancreatitis is inflammation of the pancreas. It can occur acutely or be chronic in duration, and severity can range from mild to severe. Pancreatitis can occur along with other disease processes as well and there are many possible causes of pancreatitis. It is often associated with gastroenteritis caused by dietary indiscretion. High-fat diets, ingestion of unusual food items or table scraps can be diet-related risk factors for acute pancreatitis. Other common triggers of pancreatitis include intestinal foreign body, stress, endocrine diseases, cancer, irritable bowel disease (IBD), parasites, liver disease, and gall bladder disease. Chronic pancreatitis can develop as a consequence of recurrent episodes of acute pancreatitis.

Clinical signs of Pancreatitis

Symptoms of pancreatitis include loss of appetite, lethargy, vomiting, regurgitation, excessive salivation, diarrhea, pain, hunched posture, tense abdomen, panting, dehydration, dry gums, fever.

Diagnosis

Labwork often reveals high White Blood Cell counts, high Red Cell concentration, and elevated pancreatic enzymes. Electrolyte and liver enzyme abnormalities may also be present.

Abdominal radiographs may show poor detail in the abdomen and/or displacement of organs that can indicate inflammation of the pancreas.

Ultrasonography is more sensitive than radiography in evaluating the pancreas. Ultrasonography may identify an enlarged dark pancreas surrounded by bright tissue with acute cases of pancreatitis. Other abnormalities may include thickened intestinal stomach or intestinal walls, free fluid in the abdomen, dilated bile ducts and gallbladder, and/or the presence of a pancreatic mass (e.g. abscess). Chronic pancreatitis may reveal bright pancreas due to chronic inflammation and fibrosis of the organ.

Treatment

Treatment of pancreatitis is primarily supportive care and resolving potential underlying cause(s). However, because the severity of pancreatitis can vary as well as the severity of the underlying cause, the level of treatment will also range from outpatient supportive care to intensive hospitalization. Fortunately, most cases improve with outpatient care with fluids, and anti-nausea and pain medications. Appetite stimulants and anti-inflammatory medication may also be considered. Feeding ideally small meals of a bland, easily digestible diet is recommended. Avoid high fat foods. For chronic pancreatitis,



diet and other supplements and medications to manage the underlying triggers of inflammation are essential.