doghemangiosarcoma.org

Hemangiosarcoma: the family cheat sheet

Daily checks, warning signs and the questions to ask. Written by a family who just went through it, checked against veterinary sources.

Full guide and free care tracker

Go to the ER now, day or night

- **Pale, white or grey gums** or inner eyelids
- **Collapse**, sudden weakness, can't stand
- **Resting breathing over 40 a minute**, or working hard to breathe
- **Belly suddenly bigger**, tight or painful
- **Racing heart at rest** (well over 140 in a mid-size dog)
- **Cold legs or ears**, or seems confused or far away
- **Blood** in vomit, black tarry stool, or coughing blood
- **Restless all night**, pacing, along with any sign above

Two-minute daily check

1. **Resting breaths.** Count while your dog sleeps: one rise and fall of the chest is one breath. Count 30 seconds, double it. Most dogs take fewer than 30 a minute. Watch the trend against your dog's own normal.
2. **Gums.** Lift the lip. Pink is good. Press a fingertip on the gum: pink should return in about 2 seconds.
3. **Food and water.** Write down exactly how much was eaten, not just "ate."
4. **Energy and belly.** Normal walk? Belly the same size?
5. **Weight** once a week, same scale.

Call your vet the same day

- Pale-ish gums, low energy and faster breathing together
- Breathing rate creeping up over several days
- Vomits more than 2 to 3 times, or can't keep water down
- Hasn't eaten anything in 24 hours
- Diarrhea that's bloody or lasts past a day
- Shivering, feels hot or suddenly tired 5 to 10 days after chemo

After each IV chemo (doxorubicin) dose

Day 0
Give anti-nausea pills on schedule, even if fine.

Days 2 to 5
Upset stomach and picky appetite are common. Small bland meals.

Days 5 to 10
White cells lowest, often around day 7. Watch for fever.

Every cycle
Ask about heart checks. Wear gloves for pills and cleanup.

Make the good days count

This cancer is unlucky, not your fault. Take the photos, take the drive, get the pup cup. Plan the hard decisions on a calm day, so you're not deciding at 2am.

Treatment, questions and our phone list

Treatment paths at a glance

Path	What it does	What studies report
Surgery alone	Removes the bleeding spleen and main tumor	Median about 19 to 86 days
Surgery and IV chemo	Also kills cells that already spread	Median about 172 to 277 days
Metronomic pills	Low daily doses at home that work against new blood vessels	Often used after IV chemo. Usually inexpensive.
Tumor testing, targeted drugs	Drugs matched to the tumor's DNA (for example FidoCure)	Linked to 2.6 times surgery alone when combined with chemo, in a 508-dog study

Medians mean half of dogs lived longer. Some dogs beat the averages by a lot. Ask your oncologist what fits your dog.

Questions to ask the oncologist

- What stage is it, and did the scans look at the heart, liver and lungs?
- What do you recommend, and what does each option cost in writing?
- Which side effects should make us call, and who do we call after hours?
- What should the PCV be, and how often should we check it?
- Is tumor testing or a clinical trial worth it for us?
- If there's a bleed, would you transfuse, or is it time?

Small asks that helped us

- **A PCV** (red cell count) at visits. Quick, about $60 for us.
- **A vitamin B12 shot** on low-appetite weeks.
- **Fluids under the skin** when not drinking enough.
- **A quick FAST ultrasound** to answer "is it a bleed?"
- **A wellness plan** with included exams, for frequent weigh-ins.
- **Pills hidden in sausage** or chicken.

Keep these handy

Regular vet _____ Phone _____

Oncologist _____ Phone _____

24-hour ER _____ Phone _____

Normal resting breaths _____ Last PCV and date _____

Weight _____ Last chemo date _____

Medications and doses _____

Our plan if there's a bleed _____