



# INFO SHEET: HEALTH



**GREAT DANE  
LOVERS**

Loving Danes Loving Life

**Orthopedic Issues**

---

**Food  
Exercise  
Weight**

---

**Bloat**

---

**Cancer  
Heart**

---

**Summary**

## **DON'T FORGET**

Being informed is crucial when buying your Great Dane Puppy, but it should always be fun so if you have any questions or concerns, just ask!



## Health Concerns

For all their giant size, the Great Dane can actually be quite fragile and it is so important to be aware of potential health problems in the breed and then be responsible in the care of your dog to give it the best chance of a healthy life. Some Great Danes may face one or more of the following issues in their lifetime:

- Orthopaedic problems such as Hypertrophic Osteodystrophy (HOD), Panosteitis, Osteochondritis Dissecans (OCD), Hip Dysplasia (much less commonly seen now) and often Arthritis due to age or injury.
- Gastric Dilation and Volvulus, known as Bloat
- Cancer, particularly Osteosarcomas
- Heart problems and most specifically Cardio Myopathy generally in older age.

### *Orthopaedic Issues:*

A Great Dane has long legs and they are pretty imperative for a healthy, happy life. Everything you do, especially in their puppyhood, is about keeping your Dane's orthopaedic frame healthy. Some orthopaedic issues can be inherited and irresponsible breeding from parents that are known to throw HOD, OCD or have Wobblers Syndrome is unfair to the owners who will buy these pups and love them deeply. **An experienced and informed Breeder** will make every earnest effort to prevent populating from any Great Dane with known health problems of any kind but prospective owners should know, that the risk of a disease process occurring is still there.

In your hands, the new owner can protect their pup from bringing on any disease or injury by taking some simple steps:

### *Food:*

Most Great Dane experienced people know that feeding foods with a high protein level can bring out HOD or simple over-growth. Danes do have a slower metabolism than most other breeds and even other giant breeds so the accepted practice is to stay with a food that fits the 23%-25% protein range. Too high a level of protein and/or the wrong type or quality, in the diet can contribute to growth problems. Great Danes grow very quickly and the risk of the wrong levels of protein to the rapidly forming bone structure is either excessive bone growth or too little nutrition. Some pups suffer no problems, but others can fall prone to HOD or Panosteitis.

### *Exercise:*

Protect your growing puppy's bones by controlling exercise as is discussed farther down. Great Danes require only a moderate amount of exercise, especially while they are still growing.

### *Healthy weight:*

At any age, it is always better for a Great Dane to be the correct weight. Carrying excess weight adds stress to bones and joints and particularly impacts as they grow old. An obese or even a chubby Great Dane is not a healthy one.



### **Bloat (Gastric Dilation and Volvulus):**

Great Danes have the highest predisposition to Bloat of all breeds of dogs and it is over double the risk factor of the next closest breed! Bloat occurs when the stomach twists and air becomes trapped. As the air has nowhere to escape, the Dane's stomach blows up at a rapid rate and it is when the 'torsion' happens that the stomach tissue is starting to die and other organs are impacted. Bloat is usually a critical event and many Danes do not make it through. Emergency medical care by an experienced vet in Great Danes is urgent. Do not waste time.

There is some evidence gathering around Bloat in Great Danes and other susceptible breeds at present and there are many opinions on why it happens but nothing totally specific yet. Things like feeding high or low, limiting exercise before & after meals, pre-moistening kibble or not and limiting drinking after meals are all still under investigation by vets and Dane clubs.

The one thing we do know is that the only absolutely guaranteed prevention of Bloat is a **Prophylactic Gastropexy** Gastropexy is always done as part of the emergency bloat management, after the event but many Dane owners are now having it done for their dogs when being sterilised as young dogs. Even with a Prophylactic Gastropexy, a Dane may still bloat but the deadly torsion cannot happen. If any Dane owner is considering having a Prophylactic Gastropexy done on their dog, it is very important it is performed by Dane experienced veterinary surgeons. You are taking a big step to protect your dog; you don't want to have it fail when it is needed.

### **Cancer:**

Cancers are now part of the world of canines across many breeds and they are more readily diagnosed and can be treated. Great Danes like many breeds have an exposure to cancer especially in a limb, can be a huge hurdle to overcome.

### **Heart:**

A Great Dane is a large animal with a heart that will work hard in its life and sadly for many when the heart says 'enough' will be the last time, you see your Dane standing. One of the common degenerative diseases that Danes will face, particularly in old age, is Cardio Myopathy. It can be an insidious disease and the 'slowing down' of the Dane may be passed off as 'getting older' so any prospective owner must understand the commitment needed for a 'pensioner Dane'.

### **Health summary:**

This is a small outline of the most common health issues that you could face as a Great Dane owner and we have placed them first as it is vitally important that anyone considering buying a Dane also weighs up whether they can be financially & medically supportive of the things most common to the breed.

Great Dane Lovers would urge all new owners to ensure that they have access to a highly Dane **experienced vet** for the major illness issues, and also to consider pet insurance.

*NOTE: The content of this page has been sourced directly from the Great Dane Lovers Association of WA Incorporated's website and the Great Dane Lovers Inc kindly thanks the Great Dane Lovers Association of WA Incorporated for allowing us to use their information. This content has been compiled by the committee of the Great Dane Lovers Association of WA Incorporated and anyone wanting to use this information for their own use, should contact the Great Dane Lovers Association of WA Incorporated directly on [info@qdlawa.org.au](mailto:info@qdlawa.org.au) to seek permission directly from the authors and copyright holders.*