

## Kennel cough, or infectious tracheobronchitis,

is a highly contagious respiratory infection in dogs, similar to a chest cold in humans. It is caused by a complex of viruses and bacteria, most commonly *Bordetella bronchiseptica*.

### Core Symptoms

The hallmark sign is a persistent, forceful, hacking cough that often sounds like a [goose honk](#).

- **Sound:** It may sound as if the dog has something stuck in its throat.
- **Triggers:** Coughing often worsens with excitement, exercise, or pressure on the neck (like pulling on a collar).
- **Associated Signs:** Sneezing, a runny nose, eye discharge, or gagging/retching (sometimes producing frothy mucus).
- **General Health:** Most dogs remain bright, active, and have a normal appetite.

### Transmission & Risk

It spreads rapidly through airborne droplets (coughing/sneezing), direct nose-to-nose contact, or shared items like water bowls and toys.

- **High-Risk Areas:** Boarding kennels, doggy daycares, training classes, and dog parks.
- **Incubation:** Symptoms typically appear 2–14 days after exposure.

### Treatment & Home Care

Most healthy dogs recover without medication within 1–3 weeks.

- **Rest & Hydration:** Limit exercise to prevent coughing fits and ensure plenty of fresh water.
- **Switch to a Harness:** Use a [harness](#) instead of a collar to avoid irritating the windpipe on walks.
- **Steam:** Sitting in a steamy bathroom (from a hot shower) can help soothe irritated airways.
- **Veterinary Care:** Vets may prescribe anti-inflammatories for throat irritation or cough suppressants to help the dog sleep. Antibiotics are usually only given for bacterial infections or if the dog is at risk of pneumonia.

## When to See a Vet

Contact a vet immediately if your dog is a puppy, senior, or has underlying health issues, or if they show:

- Loss of appetite or lethargy.
- Difficulty or rapid breathing.
- High fever or green/yellow nasal discharge.
- A "wet" or productive cough.

## Prevention

- **Vaccination:** The [Bordetella vaccine](#) (often given as nasal drops) significantly reduces the risk and severity of illness. It requires an annual booster.
- **Isolation:** Keep infected dogs away from others for at least 2 weeks after the cough has stopped to prevent spreading the infection.