How do I tell if my Puppy is sick?

There are a few serious, potentially fatal infectious dog illnesses that your puppy could catch. That is why it is so important to complete the series of puppy vaccinations.

The signs and symptoms of these dangerous diseases are varied and to make matters more confusing, they can often also be the sign of an entirely different, or much less serious problem.

Just as you know your own children so well that you instinctively recognize when one of them is acting ‘out of sorts,’ it won’t take long for you to see your puppy’s special pattern of behavior.

You’ll soon know what’s normal for him/her, for example:

* How long can he play for without getting tired?
* How much does he eat in a day or at each meal?
* How often he needs to ‘potty’ and what’s normal for his bowel movements
* Whether he is normally very happy and excitable or more mellow, etc.

When it comes to protecting your puppy’s wellbeing, this is all important stuff, because one of the earliest signs that all is not well will most likely be behavior that is unusual for him.

If you see any of the following, your little one could be ill and you need to CONTACT RUFF HOUSE RESCUE right away:

* **Change in activity level.** Particulary if your normally active, playful puppy seems exhausted, listless, and disinterested in his toys, games,…even you!
* **Change in appetite.** If your puppy suddenly seems to lose his appetite and won’t eat, or drink, this is a red flag. If he’s vomiting too, it’s even more critical that you talk to your vet immediately.
* **Change in bowel movements.** A big indicatore of your puppy’s health is his stools! If you suddenly find that your puppy has diarrhea (with or without vomiting), it could signal the beginning of one of several illnesses and your pup is quite likely to get sick very fast.
	+ Repeated, watery, or bloody diarrhea is an emergency situation and if your regular veterinarian’s office isn’t open, you need to get your puppy to a 24 hour pet clinic immediately.
	+ It coule be canine parvovirus or another, serious, potentially deadly puppy illness. Soft stools, or a single bout of mild diarrhea could just mean that your puppy raided the garbage or got into something.
* **Panting, shaking, or whining.** Your puppy cannot tell you if he’s not feeling well, or what hurts. But his behavior can give you clues. Panting, shaking/shivering, unusually ‘clingy’ behavior, or constant whining can all mean that there’s something wrong and he’s trying to tell you about it.
* **Weakness, dizziness, or disorientation.** There can be a number of different reasons for these symptoms of puppy illness, and if your little guy/girl shows any of them, you need to have him evaluated by your veterinarian quickly.
	+ In small and tiny breeds, a drop in blood sugar can cause hypoglycemia, which can result in all three symptoms. Giving your pup a little Karo syrup can help alleviate symptoms of hypoglycemia, but if it happens more than once, you need some expert advice.

In addition to the signs above that indicate you have a sick puppy on your hands, there are some other symptoms that can crop up and suggest that a puppy illness or puppy health concern of some sort is present.

These often aren’t cause for concern at the level of the above list, but they still need evaluation by a professional veterinarian. They include:

* **Unusual/excessive scratching or licking.** If your pup starts to lick himself all the time, it could signal a skin problem and/or dog allergies (if he’s licking his belly/paws an allergy is likely). Allergies are not generally life-threatening, but they are very uncomfortable for your puppy.
	+ If he’s licking his genital area, and is urinating more than normal, it could mean a urinary tract infection. These are more common in female puppies than males, but any pup can get a UTI. If you have a sick puppy and suspect this might be the problem, then get him to a vet right away. Antibiotics usually clear things up pretty quickly, but left untreated these types of infection can cause some serious issues.
	+ Obsessive scratching could mean parasites such as fleas or mites which cause mange in dogs, etc. Constant head shaking can also mean allergies, ear mites, or infection.
* **Change in coat.** If your puppy’s coat seems to be dull, patchy, or coarse, it could mean he has parasites or allergies. Or, ir could be an indication that his/her diet is lacking in certain nutrients.

*Information courtesy of fidosavvy.com*