



# SpiritDog

**Steffi Trott:**

Hello, Dr. Corey, thank you for joining us.

**Dr. Corey:**

Thanks.

Steffi Trott:

Looking forward to having all our puppy health questions answered. So let's get started. What are the most common reasons that puppy owners see a vet for other than the regular vaccinations and wellness checks?

Dr. Corey:

Yeah, so there's a couple of different things that we see puppies in particular for. The first one is a really common one. It's called puppy rash. So when puppies are quite small, so eight to 10 weeks, on their bellies, they get small pimples or small red bumps, and that's normally a sign of a bacterial infection on the skin. It is really easy to treat with topical washes, but we do see puppies quite commonly for that one. And then other things that we see really commonly in puppies are gastroenteritis. So diarrhea. Puppies with diarrhea, maybe a little bit of vomiting as well. They see the world through their mouth. So puppies always eat things that they shouldn't, and sometimes that can cause a bit of tummy upset. Again, normally, it's quite mild unless they've eaten something that gets stuck, which is a big problem, but most of the time, it does resolve with some treatment, but for pet owners, especially new pet owners, a day of diarrhea is a nightmare.

Dr. Corey:

So we see those quite commonly in the clinic because it's high importance to pet owners. Another really common one would be puppies who are limping or in pain, or they're not wanting to use their legs. They've been little bit too active and they are wee bit sore. So we see those quite commonly, especially it tends to be on the weekends or late at night after they had a big day honing around the household, but again, the sooner that those are treated, the better for the puppy. And then the last one I would say is probably the most serious of all of them. So coughing puppies. This tends to be in the older puppy age, like six to eight months-ish. Kennel cough is really common. These dogs are going out and because they're at the age where they need really good socialization. They're meeting lots of different people, different dogs, going to daycare. They are more at risk of getting things like kennel cough. So we do see puppies, all the puppies who have coughs and colds, and again, we can treat those quite easily as well.



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## **Steffi Trott:**

Thank you. Now, let's talk a little bit more about the injuries you mentioned. Puppies might seem invulnerable to us, Chris. They rough and tumble and they run and they fall over and we think they're fine, but it is wrong to believe that puppies cannot get hurt. So what are specific common injuries that you see in young puppies and what can owners do to avoid those?

## **Dr. Corey:**

Yeah, puppies are definitely not unbreakable. I would say a puppy is more easily hurt than their adult counterpart. If you think of puppies, they grow so rapidly, right? From when you get them to even to six months-ish. And what's happening is when they're growing, is that their bones are actually weak. So they're big bones. They start as cartilage when they're growing. So the growth plates are cartilage and the rest of the bone is solid bone, but because they're growing so rapidly, that cartilage is constantly turning over and it does make them more predisposed to things like fractures. Puppies, they jump off of the sofa and they land awkwardly. They can still break their leg because of where they've landed. So we see growth plate fractures and injuries, really common. They're called Salter-Harris fractures, and we see them particularly in puppies from really mild things like falling off of the sofa or falling down the stairs, or sometimes they're hooning around the corner and they haven't been able to put the brakes on fast enough and they slam into the wall.

## **Dr. Corey:**

And you think, "Oh, they're fine. They'll bounce back." But actually those legs can be broken. So any of major trauma where your puppy is not wanting to put any weight down on the leg or not wanting to walk or is limping afterwards should always have a checkup there. And the other thing to think about is when your puppy is still growing, so those bones are really growing at quite a large [inaudible 00:04:41] in your large to giant breeds and anything Labrador size upwards, they take a long time for their bones to fully form and to seal over, as we say. So I see a lot of owners at the beaches, especially, and they have a Frisbee or those tennis balls on the extra long flicker things, and you see the dogs chasing up and down and that repeated high intensity exercise for young puppies especially can be really damaging to growing bones and it can lead to long term problems such as cartilage breakdown, osteoarthritis or problems in the formation of the bone or even fractures as well from high intensity repeat exercise.



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**Dr. Corey:**

I've also seen the older puppies between eight months and a year, when they're doing that high intensity, chasing the Frisbee and then they suddenly stop to grab it, I've seen them rip their crucial ligaments as well. So ligament damage can be really serious and you can need surgery to fix that. So it definitely is something to consider. So I would say until they're at least one years old, you don't want to be doing high intensity chasing up and down steep hills or chasing tennis balls repeatedly. You really need to mix up the variety of the exercise that they are doing.

**Steffi Trott:**

That's a really important point for all puppy owners listening. Please be aware of that. Do not make your dog do any kind of forced or sustained exercise. As you heard, it can really lead to serious injuries. Now, what are some hidden dangers that puppy owners might not be aware of?

**Dr. Corey:**

Yeah. So that's a bit. I see the whole world is as dangerous to a puppy, but especially if you are a new puppy owner, you might not be aware of the potential problem until it's happening. So a really common one that we see is puppies who have chewed wires, especially with the world working at home at the moment, you have your puppy under the desk, and if they chew through electrical cords, they can get electrocution, which you might not always see at the time of when it happens. An electrocution can obviously cause really serious heart problem. It can cause fluid on the lungs, but it can cause really nasty burns in the mouth, and you can get what we call sloughing. So the tissue in the mouth can actually die and break away and it can be really painful and sore, but you might not be aware that it's happened until you find two or three days later, your wire for whatever you want to plug in isn't working, or if you see that the plastic outside of it is broken.

**Dr. Corey:**

So definitely any wires need to be securely taped out the way of your puppy because they can be a really big problem. Another common one that we see in puppies is actually choking. So we all love to give our pets toys and it's really exciting for them to have toys, but especially toys that have squeakers in, we've all given our pet a toy and then five minutes later turn around and it's just like a ball of fluff there. And the squeakers that can be in those toys are a real choking hazard, especially to smaller puppies, and there is nothing more stressful in the world than watching your new puppy choke to death because you can't get a squeaker out because it's too far into their throat for you to be able to get it out.



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## **Dr. Corey:**

So definitely if you're giving your pet toys, you need to be able to supervise or to be within an ear shot so that you can make sure that if the toy gets destroyed or if it's looking like the stuffing is coming up, then you just pick it up and just replace it with a different toy there. Another common danger for puppies would be the stairs. Please get a baby gate if you have stairs. The accidents that I have seen from puppies falling downstairs, broken ribs, broken bones, damage to their eyes and into their teeth, especially if you have multiple flights of stairs, and it can also create a psychological problem as well in that they've had a really bad accident on the stairs and then they can then be fearful to go near the stairs again, because they associate it with the major trauma that they've had. So just be on the side of prevention and have a baby gate there and make sure everyone knows to shut it, and it will definitely help to stop any accidents from happening.

## **Dr. Corey:**

And if you have patio doors, the see-through doors, I've definitely seen puppies not know that the door's closed, and they've run straight into the doors there, and that can cause them consciousness. They can have trauma to the head, internal bleeding, fractures. So either keep the door open if you're having access to the garden, or sometimes putting a picture on the windows themselves. Or another one is those sticky toy type things that you can stick to them so that the puppy can see, "Yes, there's something there. I can't go through it," or, "No, it's clear and I'm okay to go through." Another danger to puppies, which people don't always think about and it sounds really mean to say it, but children, especially young children and young puppies, they don't always mix well, despite everyone think they, "Oh, they look cute together." Children have no inhibitions at all. And I've seen puppies come to the clinic and the children have drawn all over them in felted pens or they've glued things to them, like pictures or sequence and things, and they can be really traumatic to a young puppy.

## **Dr. Corey:**

But then we also have to think for your older children, we can also have accidental trauma from playing a little bit too rough, or if the puppy upsets them and jumps on them, sometimes children can retaliate in the wrong way. So it is always important just to really educate your kids around treating the puppy, giving them their space, but just treating them with respect and then they're not something to be included in their play time is really important, and just monitoring them when they're together is important. That being said, most kids and puppies do get along fine. It just does need a little bit of help to start off with. Another really important



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one is in your garden. So if you have a pond or a water feature, or if it's summer and the kids are playing in paddling pool, a puppy is really small and can drown really easily in a very small amount of water. So trying to keep your puppy...

## **Dr. Corey:**

If you have a pond, fencing the pond off or putting a netting on top of it, or if the kids are playing in the paddling pool, just giving your dogs some time alone and while being in a pen so that they can see the action, but not be part of it, it can be really, really life saving. Once they are submerged into the water, they can drown, they can die. They can have secondary complications like chest infections, or lack of oxygen or permanent heart, lung damage from inhaling too much water. And again, it's literally seconds. You turn around to grab something and you turn back and all of a sudden, your puppy is in the water and it's too late. So definitely when you're thinking about your ponds and your water features in your garden, having a new look at your home can be really beneficial.

## **Steffi Trott:**

Thank you so much. Those were a lot of great points that I think everybody listening is going to keep in mind to make sure their puppies are safe. Now, are there any age specific dangers? So is an eight week old puppy more prone to one specific danger and maybe a six-month old puppy more likely to get hurt or sick from something else?

## **Dr. Corey:**

Yeah, absolutely. So in our younger puppies, between eight and 16 weeks, this is when we normally do core vaccinations, their immunity is really, really low. So they're not able to fight off the same infection that if they were six months, if you give them the same disease, they would be able to fight it off. But when they're young, they haven't developed the right antibodies and the right protection to be able to fight off disease easily. So things like Parvovirus and then other mild infections, they can be life threatening and they can die from things like Parvovirus or really nasty colds. So it is really important to be really clean in your home. Things like something like salmonella, it definitely could kill a puppy. So practicing really good hygiene, but also protecting your puppy in terms of who's coming into your home, what dogs they're mixing with.

## **Dr. Corey:**

Obviously, no unvaccinated dogs, but just trying to keep that interaction to a minimum and to be really aware of the potential risks is important for a younger puppy. And then when we get to between five months and eight months, then



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there are more at risk of eating things that they shouldn't. So that can be foods that they shouldn't need, like chocolates or stones in the garden, and that can cause really potentially life-threatening problems, like toxicities or potential for surgery to have things out. And then as they get older, between eight months and say 14 months, that's when, especially for bigger dogs, we tend to see things like congenital things. So like hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, all of that stuff really start to show. So that's when we tend to see lameness problems and sometimes knee problems, ligaments fatales. That becomes a little bit more obvious as our dogs get a little bit more active and they start to settle down into a rhythm and we start to work them a little bit more.

## **Steffi Trott:**

Got it. And now if my puppy, regardless of age has ingested something or has been hurt, so even though I tried as hard as I could to do everything right, but did not work out, something happens, how would I decide if I need to see a vet, how urgently I need to see a vet, or whether maybe everything will clear up if I just waited out at home?

## **Dr. Corey:**

Yeah. It's a really great question. I think it's something that we all ask ourselves at one point or another like, "Oh, is this a problem?" And I think technology is really helping us these days. So sometimes Google, you log into Google and you say, "Hey, can my dog have turmeric?" And you can get three or four different answers to that question. So for me, Google would not be the source of information that I would be going for. If you think that your dog has eaten something, you could either use a pet poisons helpline, or there's also online vet services, and they can be quite cost effective ways of talking to a qualified professional about, "Hey, my dog has eaten a daffodil. Is this a problem?" And they can say, "Yes, actually daffodils are toxic, and this is what you need to do." And often those are instant access.

## **Dr. Corey:**

So you pay the fee to pick up the phone to call the pet poisons helpline and they can advise you there and then, and you don't have to leave the home or anything like that and it might be, "No, there's nothing to worry about. Just monitor for these signs and X, Y, Z." They'll give you what to look out for, or they say, "Yes, that's an emergency, and this is your nearest vet clinic." So definitely it pays to spend a little bit of money to get the appropriate advice from a vet. So that's if your dog has eaten something. If your dog is injured or hurt, especially if you have a puppy, so if they're limping or they're not wanting to put weight on the limb, a general rule of thumb is if they're still limping or crying or they're not wanting to put weight on the



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leg within half an hour, that's when you need to go to the vet. Puppies do feel pain and feel it quite badly.

**Dr. Corey:**

So when you get on the top of the problem, the better it's going to be for them. If they're not eating, in an older dog, we'd say if the dog isn't eating for a day, it's a problem, but for a puppy not to be eating, there's usually something really quite wrong. So if your puppy misses even one or two meals, for me, that would be very concerning. So an inappetent puppy, a puppy not wanting to eat would be a reason to go to the vet. And obviously any open wounds that are bleeding, or they look very sore or they look like they're discharging anything like green, white, yellow, they all need urgent care as well.

**Steffi Trott:**

And last but not least, can you tell us a little bit about what age the puppies are that you most often see in your practice and what you see them for?

**Dr. Corey:**

Yeah, we definitely see lots of puppies in practice and it's always great to see cute little puppies, but not all of them did need to come in and some of these things are preventable. So I'll just start from the very beginning. Obviously we see puppies when they're first born, if their parents need a C-section, and then we see them in the first few weeks of life. So puppies who have inhaled either the fluid in the sacs that they are contained in or meconium can have chest infections, and these can have really severe lifelong consequences, which is why I thought it'd be good to bring this up. So if you are buying a puppy or thinking of getting another puppy, it's really important to ask your breeder for the full [inaudible 00:18:52] records for that puppy, so that you know if there was any problems, if there's anything congenital like a heart murmur before you decide to take on that puppy, because a puppy who's had a really severe chest infection when they're one or two weeks old can have lifelong lung compromise because of that initial bad start in life.

**Dr. Corey:**

So always get the full health records before you decide to buy a puppy. And then when they come in for their normal health checks, their vaccinations, their deworming, all of that sort of stuff, we're looking for congenital problems. So if have a testicle that is not descended, which is a problem, or if they have a heart murmur, or if they have hernias, sometimes they're born with these and as long as we are aware of them, we can fix the problem, and some problems like testicles not descending, this can be corrected with time and the same with really small heart



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murmurs. Sometimes as they get older, the heart murmur could actually go away in some cases. So we like to keep an eye on things and have puppies back regularly because obviously if the testicle descends and it's now too outside of the body, that's not a problem anymore and we can just proceed as normal, whereas if it doesn't descend, we know that that person's more likely to get cancer. So we need to go in and surgically remove those sooner rather than the later.

## **Dr. Corey:**

And then speaking of surgery, so like your desexings anywhere between six months and a year, this is the point at when we'd also check their teeth very closely. So any puppy has what we call a retained baby tooth. So normally you have your baby teeth and then your adult teeth come through after that. If you have a baby tooth and an adult tooth, it can actually impair the growth of the adult tooth to still have the baby tooth there. So we need to surgically remove those. So we always like to keep an eye on those baby teeth to make sure that they're coming out as they should and if not, we can go in and we can help them a little bit more. And then from six months onward, a skin disease would be probably another really common one that we see. So ear infections, skin rashes.

## **Dr. Corey:**

Especially if you know that your puppy has had a skin reaction once, so if it's flared up going to a particular type of grass, definitely you could look at more prevention using a different route or avoiding that area, or if it's in your garden, removing that type of plant from your garden to prevent things, from preventing the skin rashes from happening. And then we definitely see puppies who have eaten chocolate or food. Corn cobs from the barbecues in summer is a really common one for all the puppies. Again, completely preventable, but life-threatening because they need surgery to remove those corn cobs. So definitely something to be aware of if you're having a barbecue in the summer there.

## **Dr. Corey:**

And then in puppies, we tend to see their rough and tumble injuries as well. So eye ulcerations or eye traumas, especially if they're playing with other puppies, they can be quite rough, quite boisterous. So it is easy for the sensitive structures such as their eyes to get damaged, but also their nails as well, if they're playing quite roughly. To break a nail, if it's quite long is also a really common thing that we see puppies, all the puppies for. So if you are having a puppy, making sure that you're doing regular nail trims is really important to keep those nails nice and short and to prevent a torn nail. They can be really quite painful and sometimes we have to give sedation to be able to pull the nail off safely. So definitely being preventative and



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trimming the nails regularly will save you a lot of hassle in the long run and also get them used to it as well.

**Dr. Corey:**

And then definitely the diarrhea would be the other most common one, and that's often diet related. So if you are thinking of having your puppy... You want to change brands, or if you want to... Even sometimes trying a different flavor of the same brand, puppies can have quite sensitive stomachs. So it's really important to do what we call transition your diet. So it's where you feed a little bit of the new diet or the new flavor of diet mixed in with the old diet. So 75% old, 25% new, and then gradually over a couple of days, transition it from 75-25 to 50-50, and then 75 to 25, and then completely onto the new diet. We do this because the gut needs time to get used to the new proteins and molecules that make up the diet, and if you do it slowly, the body has more time to adjust and you're less likely to get reactions such as diarrhea or vomiting.

**Steffi Trott:**

All right. Perfect. Thank you so much for answering all these questions about puppy health today, Dr. Corey. Really appreciate your expertise.

**Dr. Corey:**

That's okay.