



## **BRIARPOINTE VETERINARY CLINIC**

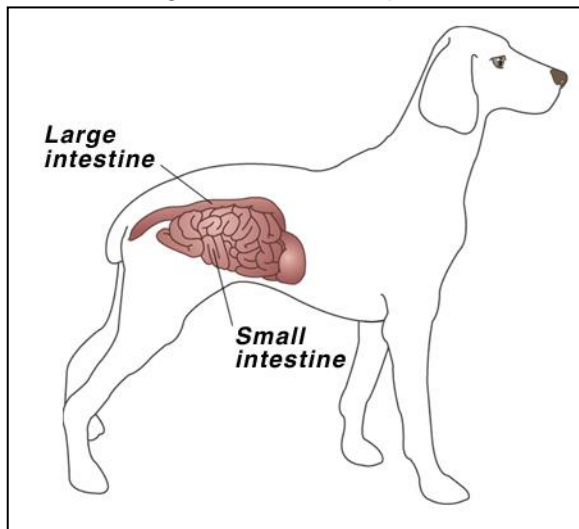
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### **MALABSORPTION AND BACTERIAL OVERGROWTH**

**What is malabsorption and bacterial overgrowth? \*Note: “Bacterial Overgrowth is now known as “Dysbiosis”.**

Bacterial overgrowth is a condition of the small intestine resulting in increased numbers of bowel bacteria. Of primary concern is small intestinal bacterial overgrowth (SIBO). The bacteria can cause changes in the absorptive surface of the bowel so digested food cannot be absorbed through the bowel and into the body resulting in malabsorption of nutrients.



In addition, the bacteria can produce a toxin which causes the intestinal cells to secrete fluid and cause diarrhea rather than absorb nutrients.

**Is this the same as an infection causing enteritis?**

Malabsorption and SIBO both result in diarrhea, similar to that associated with enteritis. However, with bacterial overgrowth the diarrhea is chronic in nature, often lasting weeks or months.

**Are some dogs more susceptible than**

**others?**

German shepherds appear to have a higher incidence of malabsorption problems. These problems are frequently associated with exocrine pancreatic insufficiency (EPI) but SIBO can occur either with or without EPI.

**What are the common clinical signs of malabsorption?**

The principal sign is weight loss with chronic diarrhea. Most dogs will have a normal or increased appetite and continue losing weight.

**Can it be differentiated from pancreatic insufficiency on the symptoms?**

Specific blood and fecal tests are necessary to differentiate EPI and SIBO. Dogs with malabsorption often do not have as voracious an appetite and the diarrhea is usually not as voluminous as EPI.

***What is the cause of this condition?***

Many cases are *idiopathic* or unknown. SIBO is frequently associated with exocrine pancreatic insufficiency.

***Can the condition be cured?***

Many cases respond to long term antibiotics. Tylosin, oxytetracycline and metronidazole are common antibiotic choices that are usually combined with special diets to treat this condition. In cases of primary SIBO without any complicating factors, the prognosis is usually good for affected dogs.

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*Edited by John S. Parker, DVM October, 2007*  
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