

### Special Diet for Urinary Crystals or Stones

If you have a dog who has had problems with either crystals or stones in her urine or bladder, you can help manage the situation through diet. Unfortunately many vets are still suggesting that people should feed a dry kibble sold through their offices, even though recent studies have confirmed that the concept of feeding a dry diet is especially unhealthy for animals with a tendency to form crystals - studies which showed that dogs fed non-dry diets had fewer occurrences of crystals. Dilute urine is less likely to form crystals, so by putting your dog on a totally canned or raw diet you'll be getting additional fluid going into him. Some of the "prescription" dry diets even go so far as to include salt in their formulas to make the dogs thirsty enough to drink water, which is as unhealthy as it sounds.

Urine test strips By periodically keeping track of the pH of your dog's urine, you will know whether it is staying in the correct range of acidity vs. alkalinity so as not to encourage the formation of stones or crystals. You can buy the little dip-sticks at a pharmacy (make sure you get the kind for urinary pH and not for urinary sugar testing). The tricky part is waiting for the right moment when your dog squats or lifts a leg to pee and managing to hold the end of the stick under the flow of urine. Good luck on that maneuver! FYI: do not expect the pH to be at a constant level: it will vary, becoming higher (more alkaline) after eating and if the dog is stressed. However, by testing now and then you'll get an idea of your dog's urinary condition, information you can share with your vet. You basically want to keep the urine not too alkaline (pH over 7) – and not too

acidic either (under 6) – which means somewhere right between those two numbers. This will make sense once you get the test strips and see the graph you compare them to, sort of how swimming pool water is tested.