


STOMACH SAVER



BY AMY SNOW AND NANCY ZIDONIS



Digestive issues are common during the holiday season, when dogs sometimes eat things they shouldn't. This simple acupressure session can help ease minor upsets and get your pooch back in the festive spirit.

The alluring aroma of a holiday turkey roasting in the oven becomes even more irresistible when it's sitting on the kitchen counter or dining table before carving. Many a wily canine has seized such an opportunity to sample the bird for himself. Or

maybe a well-meaning visitor gives your dog a generous handful of cheese balls or potato chips – after all,

he just looked so cute! He may enjoy the treats, but the diarrhea, vomiting and other symptoms that can result later will definitely dampen your holiday spirits.



Like their wolf ancestors, domesticated canines are designed to devour huge quantities at once. The only issue is that roast turkey and cheese balls are very different from a freshly hunted rabbit. Our household canines have the same digestive enzymes as a wolf, and can easily manage raw meat, but cooked and processed foods often present serious difficulties.

WHEN YOU NEED A VET

Cooked bones are brittle, and when a dog chomps on them the jagged broken pieces can seriously injure his gastrointestinal

tract. Other holiday foods, like the cheese balls and chips, tend to be too rich, while candies and cookies are too sugary, and vegetable platters too high in fiber. And some foods, like chocolate or raisins, are downright toxic to dogs.



During the holidays, be alert to what your dog is ingesting. If you suspect he has swallowed something that may obstruct his intestines, such as a small toy or decoration, or has consumed a toxic plant or some chocolate, please take him to the nearest emergency veterinary clinic. A veterinarian is the first line of defense in any emergency situation.

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ACUPRESSURE CAN SOOTHE MINOR UPSETS

With vigilance and care, you most likely won't be faced with such an emergency. But even a little treat here and there can result in short-term tummy upsets and loose stools. To help your dog recover quickly from a small holiday indulgence, consider acupressure.

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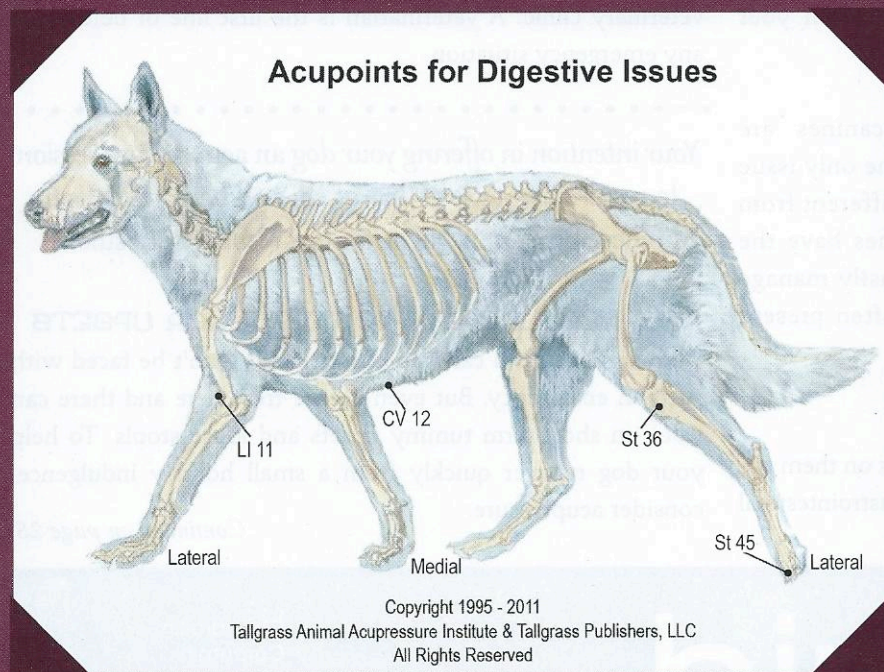
Acupoints for digestion

Stomach 36 (St 36), *Leg 3 Miles* is considered the Master point for the stomach and gastrointestinal (GI) tract. When your dog is showing any signs of indigestion such as loose stools, stimulating this acupoint can help restore healthy functioning of the stomach and GI tract as a whole. St 36 is located on the outside (lateral side) of the dog's hind leg below the stifle (knee) toward the front of the leg.

Stomach 45 (St 45), *Stomach Well Point* is the last acupoint on the energetic flow related to the stomach. This point is known to help regulate and balance the stomach's capacity to break down food into bio-available nutrients, and support stomach function. St 45 is found on the hind paw at the nail bed of the outside of the third digit (to locate the third digit, count the hind dew claw as the first digit on the inside of his lower leg, even if it is not present).

Large Intestine 11, *Crooked Pool* is known to influence the lower bowel when the dog is experiencing either loose stools or constipation, because it functions to balance and enhance the performance of the lower bowel. This point is located in the lower side of the elbow crease that's formed when you lift your dog's front leg.

Conception Vessel 12, *Middle Stomach Cavity*, is a powerful acupoint that regulates and strengthens the stomach and spleen. Because of this action, CV 12 relieves digestive issues. This acupoint is located on your dog's ventral (lower) midline halfway between the xiphoid process (the cartilage at the end of the ribs) and the umbilicus (belly button).



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In Traditional Chinese Medicine, a disruption in the harmonious flow of chi (life-promoting energy) and body fluids (blood and all other fluids in the body) leads to discomfort or illness. When a dog ingests a substance his body has difficulty breaking down into absorbable nutrients, the smooth flow of chi and body fluids is disturbed.

Your intention in offering your dog an acupressure session to restore the natural flow of chi and body fluids is to relieve his stomachache and/or resolve loose stools. Because the canine digestive tract is relatively short and the dog's stomach makes up 70% of this system, the focus of the session begins with acupressure points, also called acupoints, that are directly related to the stomach (see sidebar and chart).

All these acupoints are found on both sides of your dog (except CV 12). Work with one point at a time. To start, gently place the soft tip of your thumb on the acupoint while resting your other hand comfortably on the dog's body. Count to 30 very slowly. Watch for any reactions your dog may have. If he seems uncomfortable, move on to the next point and hold it for a slow count to 30. Expected good reactions can include stretching, passing air, yawning, licking his lips, and even falling asleep.

When you have completed the procedure described above on one side of your dog, repeat it on the other side. Be sure your dog is comfortable. If he indicates any discomfort, stop and offer this session another time.

A happy, healthy dog makes the holidays even more enjoyable. Try to avoid the pitfalls of holiday merriment, and if a minor tummy upset does occur,

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