

The Acute Vomiting Dog (by Dr Robert D C Miller)

Dogs and cats can acutely vomit for many reasons.

When a vet is presented with a vomiting patient they take into account its history and clinical status to decide upon their initial approach. By far the most common cause of vomiting is ingestion of something that does not agree with the animal.

If history and clinical examination are non-specific and the animal is not seriously ill then we will often treat the patient symptomatically (treat the symptoms). This simple approach is often all that is required, but if it is not effective then we will begin an investigation. Investigations into vomiting can be quite expensive and open-ended. It is thus clear why we do not do this routinely unless really justified.

The flow chart below (taken from Ettinger et al) shows the complexity of investigating the acute vomiter.

We use our best judgment to short cut an investigation and choose the tests we feel will result in a diagnosis soonest, but sometimes many tests are required, and many can be negative. For this reason it is difficult to give an estimate of total costs of an investigation. The best we can do is continually update a client on current charges, and costs of subsequent tests. Until we know what is wrong we cannot tell you what the appropriate treatment will be.

Sometimes it can be very frustrating for clients as they see charges mount and apparently no headway being made. But patience and understanding are required. Our goal is always to reach a timely diagnosis, avoid unnecessary charges and commence specific treatment as soon as possible.

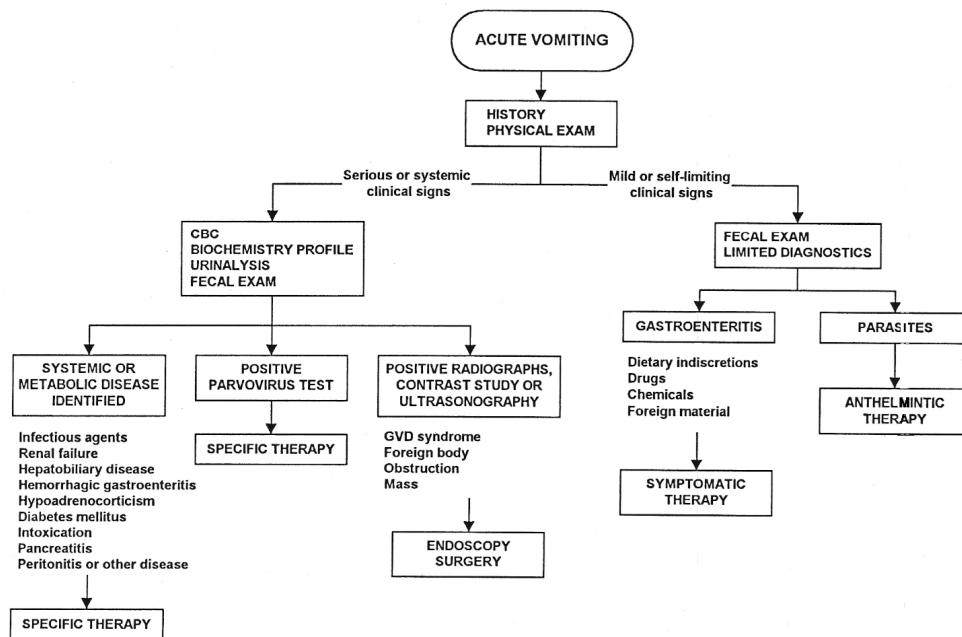


Figure 34-2. Algorithm for the diagnosis of acute vomiting.