

# Head Pressing – Could Be A Warning of Serious Illness

Have you ever seen a dog or cat press their head against the wall? It kind of looks adorable, but it isn't something that should be taken lightly. Head pressing is one of the biggest red flags that something is wrong.

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If your pet presses its head against a wall or an object, it's time to see a veterinarian to rule out the following illnesses:

- toxic poisoning
- brain tumor
- liver shunt

- metabolic disorder
- prosencephalon disease
- encephalitis
- infection of the nervous system
- stroke

## **Toxic Poisoning**

A number of toxic chemicals can poison our dogs and cats. Certain foods, such as grapes and chocolate, can also cause toxic poisoning. Toxicity can eventually lead to a whole host of other health problems including cancer, arthritis, liver disease, and immune system and neurological disorders. Learn more about toxicity [here](#).

## **Brain Tumors**

A primary brain tumor occurs from cells normally found within the brain and its membranes, while a secondary brain tumor is the result of cancer or another tumor that has spread into the tissues of the brain. In addition to head pressing, symptoms include seizures, abnormal behavior, vision and mobility problems, and hyper-sensitivity to touch or pain around the neck and skull.

## **Liver Shunt**

A liver shunt is a condition in which blood flow to and through the liver is compromised. It causes blood from the intestinal tract to bypass the liver and flow directly into the systemic bloodstream. This prevents the by-products from digested and absorbed food from being processed by the liver and removed from circulation. So the by-products remain in the bloodstream and can adversely affect some animals. One of the main symptoms is [urate crystals and urate stones](#).

## **Metabolic Disorders**

This is a broad category that encompasses hyper or hyponatremia, hepatic encephalopathy, hypoglycemia, and more. Metabolic disorders can be genetic or acquired and affect the body's energy production and can damage tissues. [Learn more](#).

## **Prosencephalon Disease**

Pacing, circling, vision problems, seizures, changes in behavior, and damaged reflexes are other symptoms of prosencephalon disease. With this disease, the forebrain and thalamus parts of the brain are affected.

## **Encephalitis**

Inflammation of the brain can be caused by many factors, including [reactions to vaccines](#) and viral infections. Seizures, lethargy, and mobility issues are other symptoms.

## **Infection of the Nervous System**

Rabies, parasites, and bacterial, viral, or fungal infections all affect the nervous system. These infections can be contracted through insect and animal bites, and from exposure to bacteria and viruses found in food and in the environment. Infections such as these are very serious and require immediate veterinary treatment.

## **Stroke**

Nancy Scanlan, DVM, advises that stroke occurs when the blood supply to the brain is interrupted and is caused by a blood clot or ruptured blood vessel. Other symptoms of stroke include dizziness, staggering, falling, seizures, eyes flicking back and forth, sudden or gradual collapse, and a twisted or distortion of the neck or torso. Many factors can lead to stroke, including encephalitis, toxic poisoning, cancer, kidney disease, and more. If your pet has any of these symptoms, please see a veterinarian immediately.

Head pressing is almost always an indication of one of the above illnesses and is not a symptom that should be taken lightly or treated at home. However, it should not be confused with affectionate head butting or playfulness that is common in dogs and cats. By recognizing the other symptoms that often accompany head pressing and seeking veterinarian attention, you can save your pet's life.