



**Animal Cancer Center of Texas**  
4522 De Zavala Road  
San Antonio, TX 78249  
210-962-5388 Ext. 3  
[www.acctpets.com](http://www.acctpets.com)

## **HEMANGIOSARCOMA**

Hemangiosarcoma is a tumor of blood vessel/vascular origin, characterized by an aggressive and highly metastatic behavior. This cancer most commonly occurs in the spleen, liver, and heart, however it can occasionally occur within and deep to the skin, as well as intramuscularly. Many breeds have a higher risk for developing this cancer, including golden retrievers, Labradors, German shepherds, Rottweilers, and Boxers. Occasionally, patients may have these tumors identified on routine examination or other imaging tests (x-rays, ultrasound), but more commonly patients present with symptoms related to internal bleeding from rupture of an internal organ tumor. This can be seen as sudden onset of weakness, collapse, pale gums, or heavy breathing.

If hemangiosarcoma is suspected or diagnosed, full staging evaluation with chest x-rays and abdominal ultrasound or CT scan is recommended to evaluate for evidence of metastasis in other organs, since this cancer has a very high risk for metastasis. This cancer can spread to the liver, lungs, skin, abdominal cavity, and many other areas of the body.

There are two main concerns with cancers as aggressive as hemangiosarcoma: local disease control and metastasis of the cancer cells. For the local disease (primary tumor) the treatment recommendation is surgical removal of the tumor or associated organ (such as in the spleen) in order to remove the tumor and stop or prevent internal bleeding. This can often be an emergency surgery and pets may require critical treatments with hospitalization, monitoring, and blood transfusions. Although the surgery may remove the primary tumor, approximately 80-90% of hemangiosarcomas have already metastasized by the time they are first diagnosed. Unfortunately, these metastatic cells are not usually visible with our diagnostic tests (called microscopic disease).

Due to the aggressive nature of hemangiosarcoma, chemotherapy is highly recommended after surgery to help control or slow the progression of the metastatic cells, although it is very rarely curative. The primary chemotherapy treatment for hemangiosarcoma is doxorubicin. Additional treatments such as piroxicam, metronomic cyclophosphamide, or other medications or supplements may also be considered. Without chemotherapy and surgery alone, dogs diagnosed with hemangiosarcoma have a poor prognosis and only live a few months. The addition of chemotherapy following surgical removal has been shown to improve survival times.

Please remember that each patient is an individual and can have variable presentations of their cancer and responses to treatment. Specific details and recommendations for your pet can be discussed in detail during a consultation with the oncologists at the Animal Cancer Center of Texas.