



**Animal Cancer Center of Texas**  
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## **HISTIOCYTIC SARCOMA**

Canine histiocytic disorders include a wide spectrum of diseases characterized by different biologic behaviors. Two of the more common forms that we encounter are a benign form (histiocytomas and cutaneous histiocytosis) and a malignant form (histiocytic sarcoma, previously known as malignant histiocytosis). Both tend to occur more commonly in certain breeds including Rottweilers, Bernese Mountain dogs, golden retrievers, labradors and miniature Schnauzers. The malignant form can be further subdivided into localized histiocytic sarcoma, arising from a single site (lymph node, subcutaneous mass, spleen, liver, lung, etc.), or a disseminated form, that involves many tissues such as the lymph nodes, subcutis, spleen, lung, brain, nasal cavity, and bone marrow.

Dogs may present with a variety of clinical signs depending on whether the tumor is localized or disseminated. With the disseminated form, dogs are often clinically ill as a result of the widespread cancer. They can have anemia, low white blood cell counts, and possibly low platelet counts. They can also have changes in the chemistry panel such as elevated liver enzymes, protein loss, or rarely kidney failure. The diagnosis is based upon a needle aspirate or a tissue biopsy. In some cases, additional immunologic stains may need to be performed on the tissue sample to differentiate histiocytic sarcoma from other types of sarcomas.

The recommended therapy is dependent upon the clinical presentation, the type of disease, and the extent of disease. The localized form of this cancer can sometimes be treated with surgical removal of the tumor, depending upon the site and size of the tumor. Follow-up therapy with chemotherapy and/or radiation therapy is often recommended after surgery to lessen the risk of spread or recurrence. The prognosis is dependent on the ability to surgically remove the disease and if spread is already present at the time of diagnosis.

The disseminated form is typically treated with chemotherapy regardless of the location, and this form carries a poor prognosis. The recommended chemotherapy consists of a drug called CCNU (lomustine). There may be a good response to chemotherapy initially, but the response is often temporary and the majority of dogs will die due to their disease. With a good response to therapy, dogs may have a good quality of life for a few months.

Please remember that each patient is an individual and can have variable presentations of their cancer and response 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.