

# Heartworm Disease Handout for Adopters

Congratulations! By adopting a heartworm positive dog, you are saving them from euthanasia. After following just a few more steps to help your pup kick heartworm disease, you will be the proud dog parent of a heartworm-free rescue animal!

## Step 1

### Schedule your Pre-Heartworm Exam

1. To request an appointment use the google form:  
<https://www.austinpetsalive.org/medappointments>
2. Come to the APA Clinic (TLAC)
  - a. The vet will listen to your dog's heart and lungs to ensure that they are healthy.
  - b. The technician will give you the antibiotic (Doxycycline) to give your dog for 28 days.  
This is an antibiotic that kills bacteria that lives in conjunction with the heartworms.

***Continue administering a monthly ivermectin-based heartworm preventative such as Heartgard or Iverhart. While heartworm positive, only certain preventatives can safely be given. Your dog can become reinfected if not kept on regular prevention, both during heartworm treatment and for the remainder of their life.***

## Step 2

### Finish the Doxycycline, then email the clinic to fill your dog's next round of medications and schedule their injections

1. Please use the appointment google form to schedule the injections which can be found on our website ( <https://www.austinpetsalive.org/medappointments>) These injections **must be 24 hours apart**, so make sure you're free both days!
  - a. The appointments must be scheduled within 2 months of completing the antibiotic.
2. Pick up the medications **at least 3 days** prior to your first injection appointment.
3. Start the Prednisone 2 *days* and the pain medication 2 *hours* before the first injection. Use the following template to remember when to give these medications -

*"My dog's heartworm injections are scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_(1st date) and \_\_\_\_\_(2nd date) at \_\_\_\_\_am/pm each day. My dog will start taking prednisone 2 days before the first injection, so they will receive their first dose on \_\_\_\_\_(2 days before 1st injection). They will get their first dose of pain medication 2 hours before their first injection. I will give the methocarbamol at \_\_\_\_\_am/pm on \_\_\_\_\_ (date of 1st injection)."*

## Step 3

### Come in for heartworm injections

This part might seem a little scary, but it's safe and just a quick poke.

- Your dog will get an intramuscular injection in their back. We will shave a little patch of fur on one side of their spine and administer the injection. The same thing will happen on the other side the next day.

- There are some side effects to look out for, but mostly your pup will feel crummy for about 18 hours. They may whine, pace, pant, shiver, and/or skip dinner. These signs should be resolved by the next day.
- Contact us if the following occurs: seizures, severe panting or pain, unable to stand
  - **Clinic: 512-466-0720**
  - **Emergency after hours number: 888-733-8840**

## Step 4

### Doggie Bed-rest for 4 weeks

- Strict confinement is **essential for the next 4 weeks**. Your dog's heart rate must remain as low as possible - no running, jumping, roughhousing, long walks, or any other form of exercise. Short leash walks and leashed potty-breaks are ok.
- After the four weeks is complete, gradually return to normal activity over 2 weeks.
- Feed your dog a normal diet.
- We will fully release your dog to you after 4 weeks post injections. After 4 weeks, the dog is fully released to your care.

## Step 5

### Retest with your Private Vet

- 8 months after the injections, re-test for heartworms with **your private vet**.
- If your dog still tests positive, APA will provide slow-kill treatment (due to risks of a secondary round of injections), free of charge, if you:
  - You can adequately prove (with vet records) that your dog has been on heartworm preventative every month since they have been in your care.
  - Provide proof of a positive heartworm test that occurred 8 months post injections.
  - Please email [medicalreception@austinpetsalive.org](mailto:medicalreception@austinpetsalive.org) in the event that your dog is still testing positive.