

North Shore Animal Hospital
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Treat Cancer in Dogs with Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy is a new ground-breaking treatment option for dogs with cancer. Cancer cells normally grow and spread because the immune system fails to recognize them as abnormal, allowing them to continue to metastasize. The vaccine is an immunotherapy vaccine used to help the dog's immune system recognize the cancer cells as detrimental and attack them. The Immunotherapy offers an affordable alternative to other canine cancer treatments.

What Canine Cancers Can Immunotherapy Treat?

It can be used to treat any cancerous tumors in dogs that are removable by surgery

- lymphoma in dogs
- mast cell tumor in dogs
- sarcoma in dogs
- osteosarcoma in dogs
- melanoma in dogs
- hemangiosarcoma in dogs (spleen or liver hemangiosarcoma cancer in dogs)
- dog skin tumors
- mammary tumors in dogs
- oral melanoma in dogs

What is cancer in dogs?

Just like human's dogs can develop cancer. Cancer is the leading cause of death in dogs. Sadly, over fifty percent of dogs over the age of ten will eventually develop cancer.

Cancer is the uncontrolled growth of abnormal cells in the dog's body. Cancer develops when the body's normal control mechanism stops working. Old cells do not die and cells grow out of control, forming new, abnormal cells. These extra cells may form a mass of tissue, called a tumor. The immune system fails to recognize these abnormal cells as dangerous or foreign and lets them continue to grow, sometimes rapidly, and spread throughout the body.

How Immunotherapy fights canine cancer

Immunotherapy is one of the latest and safest ways to treat cancer. If the dog has a tumor that can be removed and a vaccine can be created for that patient. First the tumor is removed. We then take the tumor and the cancerous cells and essentially create a vaccine to alert the body that those specific cancer cells are harmful. We then administer the vaccine to the dog which "wakes-up" the immune system and helps it to recognize the dangerous cancer cells within the dog's body. The immune system then can naturally starts killing the cancer cells and potentially helps prevent them from spreading further.

The immunotherapy vaccine is created in a laboratory using your dog's own specific cancer cells. Your vet will then be able to administer the vaccine. We create three vaccines, which are given 4 weeks apart.

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Ideal Canine Cancer Patients

- Greater than 1 year of age
- Dogs with a solid cancerous tumor that is accessible for surgical removal
- Dogs must have a predicted survival greater than 1 month without therapy

The Vaccine May Not Benefit All Dogs with Cancer

The following list describes patients that are not suitable for canine immunotherapy cancer treatment.

- Leukemia or a cancerous tumor that cannot be removed
- Any previous forms of immunotherapy
- Pregnant dogs
- Histologic diagnosis of benign tumor in the resected tumor or low grade malignancy

Side Effects of Immunotherapy

This vaccine offers an alternative treatment option for dogs with cancer that has little to no side effects. The treatment was tested in a recent trial and proved to be safe and effective at promoting an increased immune response for a variety of cancer types.

