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10 Tips for Raising a Healthy Puppy



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1 Regular visits to your veterinarian

Scheduling regular wellness visits and being proactive about your puppy's health are essential to a happy, healthy life.

- Your veterinarian is your pet's best advocate for proper health and behavioral care
- Your puppy should see the veterinarian several times during the first months of life, then at least yearly for the rest of their life

2 A complete set of vaccinations

Many diseases that can threaten your puppy are preventable with a vaccination from your veterinarian.

- The American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) provides guidelines¹ for the vaccination of pets based on various risk factors
- Your veterinarian can determine a vaccine program and schedule for your puppy based on his individual exposure risk

3 Spaying or neutering

There are multiple benefits to spaying or neutering your puppy. Discuss proper timing with your veterinarian.

- Spaying or neutering can help prevent certain cancers and infections later in life
- Spaying or neutering helps avoid unwanted behaviors related to hormones and reduce pet overpopulation

4 Proper socialization

Teaching your puppy proper manners can help prevent certain anxiety and fear behaviors. Discuss measures with your veterinarian that can minimize the risks of socializing your puppy while he is still building his immune system.

- Provide regular socialization during the first 12 weeks of age²
- The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior recommends enrolling your puppy in a socialization class as early as 7 weeks of age²

5 House training

It's a big endeavor, and positive reinforcement often goes further than punishment. If there are concerns, talk to your veterinarian, as other health conditions may be causing problems.

- Take your puppy outside after every meal, when he wakes up and after play time
- A regular schedule will help teach your puppy the appropriate times and places to potty
- Consistency, repetition and persistence are key

6 Dental care

Periodontal disease is one of the most common afflictions in dogs, affecting many as early as 3 years of age.³ Discuss a good method for maintaining your puppy's teeth with your veterinarian, and stick with it.

- Providing proper chew toys for your puppy can help to both relieve the need to chew as well as develop healthy habits for maintaining dental health
- Bacteria from teeth can affect other body systems

7 Diet & exercise

Choosing the right diet for your puppy is essential for good nutrition and proper growth. Consult your veterinarian for a recommendation based on your puppy's individual needs.

- Daily exercise can prevent obesity and help facilitate good behavior
- Have a properly fitted collar or harness, an identification tag and a leash to walk your puppy safely

8 Protection from household dangers

Puppy-proof your house, as puppies are curious and will investigate everything. There are many common household items that can be dangerous to your puppy, and proper prevention in this area is definitely worthwhile.

- Never leave your dog in a closed car, as it will get hotter, and dogs can overheat much more quickly than people
- Keep electrical cords out of reach of puppy teeth
- Household chemicals, such as antifreeze, bleach, etc., and certain foods, including raisins, onions, xylitol (a common artificial sweetener) and chocolate, are common toxins dogs can come into contact with
- If your dog has gotten into anything he shouldn't, call a veterinarian

9 Companionship

Puppies are social creatures and thrive on healthy interaction and attention. By providing lots of love and playtime, you are not only building the bond with your pup, but also helping him to relieve all that puppy energy that needs to be spent.

- Remember, your puppy would rather be playing with you than doing just about anything else
- Show your puppy attention, and praise proper behavior
- Ensure your puppy has appropriate toys to keep him busy while you are away

10 Year-round parasite prevention

The Companion Animal Parasite Council (CAPC) and the American Heartworm Society (AHS) recommend year-round parasite control to protect against heartworm, intestinal parasites, ticks and fleas for all pets.⁴⁻⁵

- **Fleas**
 - Fleas can cause severe discomfort, leading to scratching, chewing, biting and restlessness
 - Fleas can carry and transmit diseases
 - Fleas cause flea allergy dermatitis (FAD), a common skin allergy. Severe infestations can cause anemia, especially in puppies or debilitated adult dogs⁶
- **Ticks**
 - By latching onto a host to feed on blood, ticks can spread many diseases, some of which are debilitating or even deadly to both dogs and humans
 - Brown dog ticks are the most widespread and can be found anywhere dogs are, including indoors
- **Intestinal parasites**
 - Intestinal parasites can affect your dog in various ways: weight loss, diarrhea, vomiting and even intestinal inflammation or blockage. In the most severe cases, intestinal parasite infections can kill your pet⁷
 - Intestinal parasites are found throughout the United States. Puppies can acquire parasites from their mothers, contaminated environments, or from eating an infected host such as a small rodent or flea
 - Moreover, certain intestinal parasites can be contracted by humans through contact with an infected environment, potentially resulting in serious health issues⁸
- **Heartworm**
 - Heartworm infection is acquired from the bite of an infected mosquito and, if left untreated, is life-threatening
 - Although clinical signs of heartworm may be absent in the early stages, disease progression leads to coughing, exercise intolerance, difficulty breathing or collapse