



Don't let boredom ruin your puppy!

An article by dvm360 in association with Kathryn Primm, DVM, and modified for Evergreen Veterinary Hospital

You have taken the first important step to giving your puppy a happy, healthy life by seeing your veterinarian, but medical and preventative care are not the only things a new dog needs to thrive. The good news is, veterinary professionals are an excellent resource for ways to keep your puppy physically and mentally healthy.

Enrichment is fun!

Dog ancestors hunted and foraged. Of course, your puppy is dramatically different in many ways from canine ancestors, because domestic dogs have evolved along with humans, but puppy brains still need challenges. These challenges are called “enrichment”.

Zoo veterinarians have known for a while that their animals were much healthier if their environment offered enrichment. You can see polar bears floating with frozen fish or tigers rolling enormous balls. Our dogs, like these animals in captivity, are born to evade predators and find food, but they have their needs met in our homes, so we need to give them other interesting things on which to focus.

Some fun ways to create interest can be found with toys and games. Even if it is as simple as hiding treats under blankets or going for a walk outside – anything that makes your pup move and think is good for them. For example, you can hide treats in an empty paper towel roll with the ends twisted; just be prepared to clean up a little mess!

Food helps!

Some of the most fun enrichment toys for you to buy will dispense food rewards as puppies figure them out. They are novel and interesting and can help slow down your puppy's eating habits, too. There are high-tech toys that launch balls for puppies to chase. There are puzzles that puppies must decipher for a food reward. Activity mats are designed to entertain puppies too, with pockets to explore. Some of the mats have thick threads that dogs have to sniff and search through to find their reward. The more senses your dog engages for each activity, the better!

Ask an Evergreen Veterinary team member today for more information about the types of food puzzles we recommend!