



New pup predicament: What's for dinner?

An article by dvm360 in association with Kathryn Primm, DVM, and Joe Bartges, DVM, PhD, DACVIM, DACVN, and modified for Evergreen Veterinary Hospital

Your puppy is your new best friend, and you want to give them the best foundation to grow and thrive. You certainly do not want to unknowingly contribute to anything that might be harmful or inadequate for them. This is where nutrition comes in! We all know that there are pet food brands and varieties stacked to the ceiling at pet stores and grocery stores, so how do you know what your puppy really needs as they grow?

Here are some common questions and a few important tips to help you put the perfect portion on your pup's plate, prepared with advice from Dr. Joe Bartges, a board-certified veterinary nutritionist and internist.

What is the most important thing to know about feeding a puppy?

Dogs are omnivores, like people. Puppies are trying to build healthy bones and muscles, as well as brains and organs. The right nutrition is critical for the building blocks for development. A balanced diet really does matter. It is important that your puppy get a diet that is labeled for "growth" or at least says "all stages of life". These diets have been shown to be adequate for growth for an average dog. But beware, your puppy might not be average, so be sure to ask your own veterinary team to weigh in about the ways your pup might be unique.

Should I give my puppy vitamins?

Since it is especially important that puppies have what they need while they are growing, be aware that high-quality diets should provide all the nutrients needed, making vitamin supplements unnecessary. In fact, giving supplements to growing animals can be a bad idea. Excessive or abnormal mineral balance can impact normal growth. Ask your veterinary team for their favorite food brands, and keep in mind that the best brands might not be the most expensive, and rarely are the most advertised.

How much do I feed my puppy?

It is important that your puppy have adequate calories during growth, but you do not want to begin a trend toward obesity. Your veterinary team is the best resource for telling if your puppy is growing appropriately or is overweight, and they can give you an accurate feeding guide.



It is important that you measure the amount of food you offer and set up feeding times so that your puppy does not overeat or snack excessively from boredom. Puzzle feeders or multiple feeding sites can provide mental stimulation to help you build your puppy's brain, too.

Is vomiting and diarrhea normal for puppies?

Even if your puppy feels great, they should not be throwing up or having loose stool. It is crucial to have puppies with these issues evaluated right away. There are lots of causes of the issues, and only a veterinarian can diagnose and treat them.

Should I feed my puppy a homemade or raw diet?

Raw diets are in the news, but raw and homemade diets are risky for young animals. The risks for nutrient imbalance and infectious disease are too high with these foods during such a critical phase of growth.

The best advice for having your puppy's nutritional needs met is to take advantage of asking the Evergreen Veterinary Team lots of questions about your puppy's diet!