

# Managing Puppy Teething

By four or five months of age, your puppy will start teething. Many puppies teethe until they are 9 to 12 months old! Chewing helps relieve the pain and pressure that comes along with teething—in fact, chewing is really the only thing puppies can do to help lessen the discomfort. Here are some steps you can take to help manage puppy teething:

## #1: Puppy-Proof Your Home

As with human infants, the first rule to manage chewing is to control the environment. Keep tempting items out of reach either by locking them up or disallowing doggy access to areas where these things reside. Keep shoes in the closet, towels in their drawers, and magazines on higher shelves.

## #2: Introduce Appropriate Chew Toys

After you've dog-proofed your home, provide your puppy with lots of appropriate chew toys. Softer chews made from rubber or other flexible materials are specifically designed for puppies without adult teeth. You can also try freezing a washcloth that has been tied in a knot to help soothe sore teeth and gums. Teaching him to chew on appropriate items will ensure that the transition from teething puppy to well-trained adult dog is a happy one for all.

## #3: Correct Inappropriate Chewing

If your puppy starts to nibble on or has an inappropriate item in his mouth:

Utter a sudden “Ah,” loud enough and sharp enough to get a startled response or an immediate stop to the behavior. If you don't get this type of response, try this next technique.

Quickly entice him with an appropriate toy by waving it like prey. Encourage him to grab it, and when he does, let go of the offending item and praise him. If he doesn't respond to praise alone, give him a treat for letting the taboo object go, then offer an appropriate toy.

If your pup runs off with a forbidden item as soon as he sees you heading his way, avoid being sucked into the chase, which is fun for him. Instead, ignore him or pretend to play with something better until he leaves the object on his own, or have him perform an alternate incompatible behavior—"say please by sitting," "come when called," "target," or "leave it." The most useful solution is "come when called" followed by a food trade until the behavior becomes a habit.

Another alternative is to put foul-tasting products such as cayenne pepper, bitter apple spray, or bitter orange spray, which you can purchase at the pet store, on things your puppy shouldn't chew. Dab good-tasting foods such as peanut butter on appropriate chew things, such as Nylabones.

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