

Dog Wellness Checklist: For Dogs Over 6 Months Old 🐕✅

This checklist provides a quick reference for maintaining your dog's health, happiness, and well-being. Use it to ensure you're covering all the essential aspects of care for your canine companion.

1. Veterinary Care & Preventive Health 🩺

Frequency: Annually (or as recommended by your vet, especially for seniors or those with chronic conditions)

[] **Annual Veterinary Exam:** Full physical check-up.

[] **Vaccinations:** Up-to-date on core and non-core vaccines (e.g., Rabies, Distemper, Parvovirus, Leptospirosis, Kennel Cough, Lyme Disease) as recommended by your vet based on lifestyle.

[] **Heartworm Prevention:** Administer monthly/injectable preventative year-round.

[] **Flea & Tick Control:** Administer year-round preventative.

[] **Fecal Exam:** Check for intestinal parasites.

[] **Deworming:** Administer as recommended by vet.

[] **Dental Check-up:** Discuss professional cleaning needs with your vet.

[] **Weight Assessment:** Discuss ideal body condition and weight management with your vet.

[] **Spay/Neuter:** If not already done, discuss with your vet.

[] **Microchip Check:** Ensure microchip is registered and contact info is current.

2. Nutrition 🍴

Frequency: Daily

[] **High-Quality Dog Food:** Feed a complete and balanced diet appropriate for your dog's life stage, size, and activity level (AAFCO compliant).

[] **Portion Control:** Measure food accurately to maintain ideal weight.

[] **Consistent Feeding Schedule:** Feed 1-2 times daily.

[] **Treats in Moderation:** Limit treats to 10% or less of daily caloric intake.

[] **Fresh Water:** Ensure constant access to clean, fresh water.

[] **Avoid Harmful Foods:** No chocolate, grapes/raisins, xylitol, onions, garlic, etc.

3. Exercise & Physical Activity

Frequency: Daily

[] **Daily Walks:** Provide at least one long walk, or multiple shorter walks, varying routes for mental stimulation.

[] **Playtime:** Engage in interactive play (fetch, tug-of-war) in a secure area.

[] **Appropriate Intensity:** Adjust exercise to your dog's breed, age, and energy level.

[] **Mental Stimulation:** Incorporate sniff walks, puzzle toys, or dog sports.

[] **Weather Awareness:** Adjust exercise for extreme heat or cold; protect paws.

4. Training & Mental Stimulation

Frequency: Ongoing

[] **Reinforce Basic Obedience:** Practice commands like sit, stay, come, down, leash manners.

[] **Positive Reinforcement:** Use rewards-based methods for training.

[] **Mental Enrichment:** Provide puzzle toys, chew toys, and scent games.

[] **New Experiences:** Introduce your dog to new safe environments, people, and sounds.

[] **Address Behavior Issues:** Consult a professional trainer/behaviorist for any concerns.

5. Grooming & Hygiene

Frequency: As needed, but regularly

- [] **Brushing:** Brush regularly based on coat type to prevent mats and remove loose fur.
- [] **Bathing:** Bathe as needed with dog-specific shampoo.
- [] **Nail Trims:** Trim nails every 2-4 weeks or as needed to prevent overgrowth.
- [] **Ear Cleaning:** Check ears weekly; clean if necessary with vet-approved cleaner.
- [] **Eye Care:** Gently wipe away any discharge.
- [] **Daily Tooth Brushing:** Aim for daily brushing with dog-specific toothpaste and brush.
- [] **Dental Chews/Additives:** Use VOHC-accepted products as supplements to brushing.
- [] **Lump Check:** Regularly feel for any new lumps or bumps during grooming.

6. Safety & Environment

Frequency: Ongoing

- [] **Secure Yard:** Ensure fencing is secure to prevent escapes.
- [] **Leash Use:** Always use a leash in public areas unless in a designated off-leash park.
- [] **Pet-Proof Home:** Store toxic substances and plants out of reach.
- [] **Hazardous Objects:** Keep small objects, strings, and choking hazards away.
- [] **Heat/Cold Safety:** Never leave dog in hot car; provide shelter in extreme weather.
- [] **ID Tag:** Ensure collar has up-to-date ID tag.
- [] **Pet First Aid Kit:** Have one readily available.

7. Socialization & Emotional Well-being

Frequency: Daily/Ongoing

[] **Continued Positive Socialization:** Expose to various people, places, and friendly dogs.

[] **Quality Time:** Spend dedicated time playing, training, and cuddling.

[] **Avoid Isolation:** Ensure your dog isn't left alone for excessively long periods.

[] **Recognize Stress Signs:** Be aware of and address signs of anxiety or fear.

[] **Patience & Love:** Provide consistent affection and understanding.