

PREVENTATIVE CARE FOR PETS: How do I choose what's best for my puppy?

The possibilities are endless. So many vaccinations, pet foods and other products and services exist for puppies, and so many people are willing to give you advice about which to choose. One of the best ways to start planning a health care program for your pet is to do an analysis of his or her risk factors. This will help you narrow your choices and select those that make the most sense. You should also work with your pet's veterinarian to decide what's right in your situation. Well-meaning but misguided advice from groomers, feed mill or pet store employees, friends and neighbors, even internet sites like this one, can never replace the expertise of a trained professional doctor who knows you and your dog.

Most of us are familiar with risk factors when it comes to human health. They can be environmental or lifestyle factors, such as smoking, obesity, poor diet or living next to a toxic waste dump. These factors make it more likely that a person will be affected by a particular disease, such as heart disease or lung cancer. Other risk factors may be genetic. If breast cancer runs in your family, your own doctor may want to perform mammograms early and often. If heart disease affects the health of your parents, stress testing and a low cholesterol diet will be important things to discuss with your physician.

Pets have risk factors, too. They also can have environmental or lifestyle factors which increase their risks for certain diseases. For example, poor diet and obesity in pets lead to medical problems just as they do in people. Many diseases of pets are inherited or have genetic factors as well. For instance, 5% of Doberman Pinscher dogs die every year from a heart disease called cardiomyopathy, and many more are diagnosed with the disease. Because Dobermans are at such high risk for this disease, screening for it should be done at least annually from the time the pet is a year or so old, with an ECG (electrocardiogram, also sometimes called an EKG). If the ECG reveals abnormalities, further diagnostic tests can be done to confirm or rule out cardiomyopathy, and medication can be started which can prolong life expectancy for a year or even 2 or 3 years. If the disease is not detected until the dog shows signs of being ill, life expectancy is only weeks to a few months.

In addition to things like obesity or poor diet, lifestyle factors that cause increased risk of illness in pets include exposure to contagious diseases and parasites. Dogs that go to a groomer regularly or board at a kennel are at high risk for contracting kennel cough. These pets should be protected with a vaccination for this disease. Dogs that have exposure to deer ticks are at risk for Lyme Disease, and again, a vaccination may be recommended. Parasite exposure varies from region to region and also depends on where the dog lives, works or plays. Puppies and dogs that visit a dog park will be at risk for intestinal parasites picked up from other dog's stools. Dogs that swim in lakes, streams or ponds may be exposed to the protozoal parasite *Giardia*. Dogs that go hunting in the woods may need strong tick protection.

Because each dog's situation and heredity is different, you will need to visit your veterinarian at least once a year to establish and maintain a health care program that addresses all the risk factors present for your pet. It is part of your veterinarian's job to help guide you as to what care needs your pet may have and to advise you on what products and services might help your pet live a longer, healthier life. Because medicine is constantly changing and new advancements are developed every year, your pet's health care program will probably change with time. Since advancing age is also a risk factor for many diseases, his or her care needs will change with age as well.

95% of puppies and kittens are born with intestinal parasites already present in their body.
--

It's also your veterinarian's role to help you prioritize, so you can budget for the most important risks first. Some diseases are much more likely or dangerous than others, so you'll need to plan accordingly. It's important to remember, too, that although some diseases are just as common in pets as people, such as allergies or diabetes, others are rare or have different symptoms. The more you know about the signs and symptoms of disease in pets, and the diseases prevalent in your area or your dog's breed, the more you can assist your pet's doctor to come up with the right plan for your situation. Since preventing diseases is usually cheaper, easier and a lot safer for your pet than waiting for illness to appear, knowing what to do to avoid illness is the smart way to go! So ask your veterinarian for advice and remember, your pet's health is truly in your hands.

This table is an example of some of the many risk factors for dogs, and what care may be recommended accordingly.

Risk factor	Diseases for which your pet may be at risk	Recommendation
Ears that hang down	Otitis Externa – ear infections	Weekly ear cleaning
Swimming	Otitis Externa, <i>Giardia</i> , skin infection	Ear drying solution <i>Giardia</i> vaccination
Obesity	Arthritis, diabetes, heart disease	Diet and exercise program
Large breed dog	Hip dysplasia, arthritis, bone cancer	Screening x-rays, diet formulated for large breeds
Small breed dog	Periodontal disease, mitral valve disease in the heart	Regular dental care, chest x-rays and ECG as the pet ages
Dental tartar build-up	Periodontal disease, tooth loss; heart, liver, kidney disease	Dental cleaning under anesthesia
Boarding, groomer, dog park, other frequent contact with dogs	Kennel cough disease	Vaccination for Bordetella bronchiseptica and parainfluenza, which can cause this disease
Boxers, Doberman Pinschers, English Cocker Spaniels, all the giant breeds	Cardiomyopathy	Annual ECG screen, Echocardiogram if abnormalities appear

The basic care needs that follow are the starting place for any pet health care program. These suggestions will enable you to provide the best health care, allowing your dog to live as long as possible.

CARE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUPPIES

- **Initial physical examination.**

Your pet's doctor will do a thorough exam of all your pet's major body functions, paying special attention to genetic or inherited disorders such as heart murmurs, hernias or misaligned teeth. The first puppy visit is also the ideal time to discuss the risk factors your puppy will have and to set up a health care program for the upcoming months and years. Most veterinarians or their technicians can also help you with housebreaking, chewing and other common puppy problems.

It is very important to schedule this first visit right away, even if the breeder has recently vaccinated or de-wormed your puppy. 8-12 weeks of age is a critical period in a puppy's development. Missing a problem or opportunity to socialize a puppy at this age can have long-term consequences for his health and behavior.

The time of your pet's first physical is also the ideal time to do some laboratory testing. Lab tests are like a window into your pet's body. They allow us to see problems that aren't visible from the outside. Testing in puppies usually includes a stool sample test for intestinal parasites. Sometimes ear mites, ringworm or other diseases will be suspected and additional testing will be required.

Nutrition, behavior, dentistry and most of the other topics listed below are appropriate for discussion with your puppy's first visit to the hospital.

- **Vaccinations and boosters.**

Unfortunately there is no safe, effective drug available to combat any of the major viral diseases of dogs. Vaccination is the only effective form of protection. Vaccination enables your dog to fight infection by stimulating the immune system so it makes antibodies against the viruses.

YOUR PUPPY'S FIRST VISIT

The way your puppy perceives his or her first visit to the veterinary hospital will greatly influence the way the puppy will respond there for the rest of its life. Puppies are sensitive to emotional cues from their owners. How you react to new situations tells the puppy how to react as well.

Therefore, you can interpret for the puppy the way it should respond in new or traumatic situations such as this first veterinary visit! To do this, behave in the way you want the puppy to behave when he or she is an adult dog.

For example, if you want a dog that tolerates veterinary visits, even enjoys them, act cheerful and upbeat before, during, and especially immediately after the treatment. If the pup yips or yowls during a procedure, talk to it in a jolly tone of voice until it wags its tail.

DO NOT coddle, coo, make sympathetic noises or soothingly pet the pup, or you will teach him to be worried and concerned, instead of cheerful and matter-of-fact.

This tactic also works in other new situations, such as trips to the park for socializing with children and adults, puppy kindergarten classes or when other dogs or strangers approach.

A dog that is relaxed and confident in any situation is an ideal pet, and an ideal veterinary patient as well.

Many common diseases, including distemper, are deadly to your dog. During the initial day of nursing puppies receive antibodies against certain diseases from their mother's milk. These protective antibodies are gradually lost between 6 and 16 weeks of age. Your puppy should be vaccinated several times during this period. Some diseases may be carried by rodents and wild animals, as well as dogs. They can also be carried into your house on your hands, shoes or clothing. Even if your dog is not in contact with other dogs, he or she is still at risk!

The DHLPPC vaccine, containing distemper, hepatitis, leptospirosis, parainfluenza, parvovirus and coronavirus, is usually given every 3 to 4 weeks, from the time the puppy is 6-8 weeks old until it is about 16 weeks old. A Bordetella vaccination is often given along with the first or second DHLPPC, to protect against canine kennel cough.

When a puppy is 12 weeks of age or older, he or she will also receive a rabies vaccination. Rabies vaccination is required by law to protect people as well as pets.

If you live in an area of the country where Lyme Disease is found, especially if you take your dog hunting or camping, if you live in the country, or if you can see deer from your yard your dog may also need protection against Lyme disease, which is usually carried by deer ticks. This requires an initial series of two vaccinations spaced a few weeks apart, and yearly boosters thereafter. The shots may be started when your puppy is 12 weeks of age.

To maintain this protection, dogs must be vaccinated regularly so the level of immunity is always high enough to prevent disease. Immunity produced by vaccination does not last forever. It is very important that your dog be re-vaccinated regularly. Distemper, Hepatitis and Leptospirosis are all widespread, contagious and deadly diseases. Nearly every dog will be exposed during its lifetime. These diseases are usually all included in the "distemper" vaccination.

Parainfluenza and Bordetella cause "kennel cough", a common and debilitating upper respiratory infection. The more your dog comes in contact with other dogs (at the groomer's, boarding, meeting other pets on the sidewalk or in the park) the greater the risk. Vaccinations for these infections may be administered as an injection or by nose drops. [Click here for more information on Bordetella vaccination.](#)

Parvovirus causes bloody diarrhea as it destroys the immune system and intestinal lining. It is often fatal even with costly intensive care. Worldwide, Parvovirus is the deadliest virus, killing more dogs than any other disease. Parvovirus vaccination is usually included in the "distemper" vaccine. Doberman Pinschers, Rottweilers and pit bulls are especially vulnerable to this disease and often receive extra boosters for it as puppies.

Coronavirus is the second leading cause of viral diarrhea in dogs of all ages. Although not as severe an infection as parvovirus, coronavirus can still be debilitating, especially to puppies.

Rabies is a fatal infection of the nervous system that attacks all warm-blooded animals including humans. There is no cure. Rabies has been on the rise for the past several years, especially along the East Coast. Because Rabies is a risk to humans as well as to pets, all dogs and cats should be vaccinated regularly.

Lyme Disease, usually carried by ticks, poses a serious health risk to both dogs and people. Lyme disease causes crippling arthritis and heart, kidney and nervous system damage. Dogs with exposure to deer or deer ticks are especially at risk. The disease originated in Lyme, Connecticut, and is common along the East Coast and New England, the Great Lakes states, especially Wisconsin, and some areas along the West Coast as well. [Click here for more information about Lyme Disease and Lyme vaccination.](#)

Pet owners are 40% less likely to need doctors than those without pets. Owning pets can also reduce your cholesterol level, ease anxiety and lower blood pressure. Heart attack patients who own pets are more likely to survive than non-pet owners.

**Your Pet's
Approximate Age
In Human Years**

6 months = 12 years
1 year = 15 years
2 years = 24 years
3 years = 28 years
4 years = 32 years
5 years = 36 years
6 years = 40 years
7 years = 44 years
8 years = 48 years
9 years = 52 years
10 years = 56 years
11 years = 60 years
12 years = 64 years
13 years = 68 years
14 years = 72 years
15 years = 76 years
16 years = 80 years
17 years = 84 years
18 years = 88 years
19 years = 92 years
20 years = 96 years
21 years = 100 years
(Larger dogs age more quickly than small ones)

Giardia is a water-borne parasite which can be harbored in the intestinal tract and flare up with stress or other illnesses. Shed by many wild animals, and also infectious to people, it lingers in lakes, streams or ponds, and even in puddles in your yard. It is frequently found in dogs that swim or hunt. It is also common in breeding kennels and is readily passed from mother dog to puppies. A new vaccine can protect your dog, and therefore your family as well, from this disease. [Click here for more information on Giardia vaccination.](#)

Vaccine protocols have changed in recent years, as new diseases have appeared and spread, and new vaccinations have been developed. Parvovirus did not appear until the 1970's and vaccines for the disease have become much more effective over the last few years. There was no vaccine for Lyme Disease before 1990. Your veterinarian's vaccination recommendations have probably changed over the years. Chances are good that they will change again over the next ten years. As your dog comes in for annual physical exams your veterinarian should be talking to you about new vaccines and vaccination schedules.

Dogs are exposed to lots of other diseases, so you need to decide on a total health care package for any dog, especially one that has exposure to other dogs or lives outside. This will usually include vaccination for Distemper, and the other viruses included in the DHLPPC vaccine and Rabies for all dogs. Bordetella, Lyme or Giardia vaccinations may also be recommended. Dogs should also be protected against fleas, if you live in an area where they are a problem, and intestinal parasites, as part of a regular health care program

• **Nutrition.**

Feed the highest quality food you can afford. Premium pet foods available in pet stores or at a veterinary clinic are much more digestible and result in a healthier pet with less stool volume. DO NOT feed table scraps and human snacks.

Nutrition is critical for a growing puppy. Large breeds double their body weight between 8 and 12 weeks of age! Young puppies need frequent meals and a high quality food for proper growth and nutrition.

Be careful in choosing brands of food and treats for your puppy as well. One of the most important factors in living a long, healthy life is nutrition. Some pet food manufacturers are better than others. Many treats contain high levels of sodium, fat or artificial colors and flavors. Labels and advertising claims can be deceiving. Be sure to ask your veterinarian what food is best for your pet, what treats are most healthy and how much food should be fed each day. [Click here for more information on nutrition.](#)

• **Internal Parasites . . .**

threaten your puppy's health. In large numbers they can cause intestinal blockage, bloody diarrhea and even death. Certain types can also affect you and your family. Microscopic examination of your pet's stool needs to be done regularly. [Click here for more information on internal parasites.](#)

In a recent nationwide study of 6,458 dogs, 15% were found to have roundworms, 19% had hookworms, 14% suffered from whipworms. In the Midwest, 39.2% of the dogs had at least one of these types of parasite.

• **Dental Care . . .**

is just as important for your pet as it is for you. The average lifespan of a dog that receives

Dental care has saved the lives of more pets than any other advance in veterinary medicine in the past 15 years. The life expectancy of dogs and cats that receive dental care is 10-20% longer than those that don't. For some pets, this may mean as much as five years!

timely dental care is 10-20% longer than one that doesn't. Learning how to brush your puppy's teeth is a great thing to start at a young age. Getting him accustomed to it while he's young and easier to handle will ensure you can work with his mouth when he gets older. Even if you brush, dental cleanings when your pet gets older are a necessary component of a long, happy life for your dog. [Click here for more information on dental care and to learn how to brush your pet's teeth.](#)

EXERCISE IN PUPPIES

All puppies need to exercise. Usually a small amount of encouragement is all they need to be active. Playing ball or running freely with your puppy on grass is the recommended way to exercise.

Daily walks on concrete are not recommended for young puppies because you may create a problem with their skeletal development. Walking or playing on a concrete surface is tough on soft, young joints and can lead to early arthritis.

Once your puppy has reached the age of one year, you can begin to take him for walks on concrete sidewalks. Even then, build gradually. Begin with a one block walk and increase each week until you are walking the desired distance.

Jogging is okay if the dog's bone structure has developed properly. Check with your veterinarian about your pet's hip development before you jog long distances with him.

Unfortunately, most puppies who have a keen play drive do not know enough to slow down or quit and therefore risk heat stroke during the summer season. Never over-exercise your puppy in extreme temperatures, be they hot or cold. If your puppy begins to slow down or lag behind you, it is usually an indication he is finished and needs to be taken home immediately.

- **Exercise.**

Most dogs don't get nearly enough exercise. Poor health, obesity and boredom-related behavior problems often result.

- Provide a constant supply of fresh, clean water.

- Provide adequate shelter if your pet is an outdoor dog. [Click here for more information on building a doghouse.](#)

- **Keep your pet under control.** Don't let it run loose. Purchase an I.D. Tag to place on your pet's collar and keep it on at all times. It is your pet's "ticket home" if lost. Consider a microchip or tattoo for permanent identification. [Click here for more information on microchipping.](#)

- **Heartworm Disease . . .** is serious and deadly. It is carried by mosquitoes. A blood test is needed to check for these parasites and daily or monthly medication is given to

prevent this disease. [Click here for more information on Heartworm Disease and prevention.](#)

- **Groom and trim nails as needed.** Keep an eye out for fleas, dandruff, sores, lumps or bald spots. Report any skin problems to your veterinarian. [Click here for more information on the care of your pet's skin, coat and nails.](#)

Brush your pet regularly to prevent mats and tangles. Start when your puppy is young with short sessions and a soft brush. Reward your puppy with a treat when he sits still. Try to pick a time when he is quiet and sleepy, not when he's wanting to play!

- **Accustom your puppy to handling**

Anyone who has had to medicate a dog that doesn't want to be medicated knows how difficult it can be to get pills down an uncooperative patient. Make your life easier later on! Handle your puppy's mouth, ears and feet often while it is young. Squeeze the lips and tip the head back to open the mouth, pretend you are putting something on the tongue, and then reward with praise or a treat. Do this several times a day. (While the puppy is sleepy and not trying to attack any moving object!) Wipe the ears out with a damp cotton ball daily. Play with the feet and toes. All this handling will get your new pet used to the feel of medical procedures such as

giving pills, trimming toenails or treating ear infections. [Click here for more information on avoiding behavior problems.](#)

- **Spay or Neuter your Pet**

Altered pets live 40% longer, and 90% of the dogs and cats surrendered to humane societies are not spayed or neutered. Unless you are breeding your purebred pet with careful research and attention to the health of both the parents and the puppies or kittens, your pet should be spayed or neutered.

Over 60% of dogs that are hit by cars each year are unneutered males. 60% of unneutered males will also develop prostate disease or cancer. 75% of unsprayed females will develop breast cancer and 75% will develop a serious uterine infection called pyometra. Many will develop both problems.

If you want your pet to live a long time, have him or her altered! [Click here for more information on pyometra.](#) [Click here for more information on spaying and neutering.](#)

Injury to humans is 5-9 times more likely from male dogs, intact OR neutered. Early exposure to sex hormones in the uterus may be more important to aggression than the testicular hormones that begin circulating after puberty. Neutering may help with aggression but it is a long way from a cure.

In 1992, 6.3 million dogs were put to sleep because they had no home. 56% of dogs who enter shelters and humane societies each year are euthanized. Walk down the aisles of your local shelter and imagine that every other dog you see will be put to sleep. The percent of cats adopted is even lower.

- **Flea Control . . .**

is essential. Preventing fleas with regular use of effective flea products is much less costly than treating a full blown infestation of fleas in your home. DO NOT waste your money on over-the-counter flea products. Many do not work and some can even be harmful to your pet. Products available from your veterinarian's office provide good control, have been rigorously tested and are proven safe for your pet. Veterinary staff members will also take the time to individualize a flea program to suit your requirements and budget. [Click here for more information on fleas and flea control.](#)

- **Invest in Training**

80% of dogs surrendered to humane societies have had no obedience training. Teaching your dog to be a well-behaved family member is one of the responsibilities of owning a dog. Lack of training makes for an unruly pet who is not a pleasure to own and thus can end up as a euthanasia statistic instead of a cherished family member. Dog training classes build a strong bond between owner and pet, help you channel your dog's natural behaviors into constructive outlets and are a lot of fun besides! [Click here for more information on behavior, training and socialization.](#)

- **Never give human medications to your dog without checking with your veterinarian.**

- **Report any changes . . .**

or problems in your dog's health or behavior to your veterinarian as soon as possible. Diseases or behavioral problems are usually more successfully treated the earlier they are addressed. [Click here for more information on signs of disease in pets.](#)

- **As your dog ages.**

Geriatric Workups help detect many of the problems caused by aging (kidney, liver, heart, arthritis, dental etc.) Early detection can lengthen your pet's life. Proper treatment will improve your pet's quality of life. [Click here for more information on geriatric screening.](#)

Preventative health care is much more than just vaccinations!
Your veterinarian is there to help you assist your pet in living a long, healthy life at the lowest cost to you.

Please use this checklist on a regular basis. You can discover many problems before they become serious and cause undue pain and expense.

HOME CHECKLIST FOR PET HEALTH

My Pet . . .

- . . . is acting normal - active and in good spirits.
- . . . has a normal appetite with no chewing or swallowing difficulty.
- . . . breathes normally, without straining or coughing.
- . . . urinates in the usual amounts and frequency.
- . . . has normal appearing bowel movements.
- . . . walks without stiffness, pain, or difficulty.
- . . . has healthy looking feet and short nails.
- . . . has a full, glossy coat in good condition.
- . . . has skin that is free from dry flakes and not greasy.
- . . . is free from fleas, ticks, lice or mites.
- . . . has eyes that are bright, clear and free of matter.
- . . . has ears that are clean and free of debris and odor.
- . . . has a moist nose, free from discharge.
- . . . has clean, white teeth free of plaque and calculus.
- . . . has gums that are pink with no redness and non-offensive breath odor.
- . . . has a body that is free from lumps/bumps as I run my hand over its entire body.

Call your veterinarian if you answer no to any question.

COMMON PARASITES OF PUPPIES

Keeping pets safe from intestinal parasites helps protect people too. Zoonoses, diseases that can be transmitted from pets or wildlife to people, or vice versa, are not uncommon. The roundworms (*Toxocara* species) and hookworms (*Ancylostoma* species) that dogs and cats frequently carry are contagious to humans under the right circumstances. These species of worms belong to the family of parasites called Helminths. A supplement to a veterinary journal, also sent as a supplement to a human medical journal, Contemporary Pediatrics, recently addressed this problem. Entitled "Protecting Children from Helminthic Zoonoses," this 22 page monograph details how this occurs. I'd like to share with you a few key paragraphs from this scientific publication.

"The egg output of *Toxocara canis* adults, and thus infected puppies, is astounding. This output, along with the marked environmental resistance of *T. canis* eggs, accounts for the zoonotic threat posed by infected pets. Adult female *T. canis* can produce more than 100,000 eggs per day. Fecal egg counts in puppies can reach 100,000 eggs per gram of feces (a gram is well under 1/4 teaspoonful), so that heavily infected puppies can shed millions of eggs per day. In a Purdue University study, we examined environmental contamination by infected puppies and found that two puppies with low worm burdens still shed an average 10,983 *T. canis* eggs per gram of feces, for an output of 294,454 eggs per defecation. In a single week of random defecation in a yard, these puppies shed an estimated 20,545,459 eggs, contaminating a main area of 2,800 sq. feet and random parts of an area of 12,341 sq. ft. At suitable temperatures, *T. canis* eggs develop to infectivity in two to four or more weeks and can remain viable in the soil for several years. The eggs are very sticky and will adhere to various objects, such as toys, further ensuring their spread and eventual transmission to children and others."

Over 10,000 people, most of them children, become infected with roundworms every year in the U.S. Over 700 of them suffer blindness or permanent visual impairment.

"In people, ingested eggs hatch in the small intestine. Larvae penetrate the intestinal wall and...migrate to the liver and then to the lungs. From the lungs, larvae enter the ...circulation and are distributed throughout the body, entering a variety of tissues...Pathologic changes can be extensive and involve numerous tissues, including the liver, lungs, heart, brain, and eyes....Acute to chronic disease...is most common in young children (1 to 5 years old; the average age is 2 years) who ingest large numbers of eggs or who are repeatedly infected."

Internal parasites are diagnosed by having a fresh stool sample examined under a microscope by someone at the veterinary hospital. This should be done as part of a health exam when you obtain a new puppy or dog. It should also be done on a yearly basis as part of your dog's annual health exam and vaccinations.

Breeders are the people exposed to the greatest numbers of infective parasites. A breeding bitch and her puppies can put out 15 million eggs per day. In the United Kingdom, dog breeders and their employees have a significantly higher prevalence of infection than the general population. This is probably something to consider when you decide to let your dog have puppies, especially if you have small children in your household.

Wildlife, such as raccoons and skunks, stray cats and deer also shed parasites which can infect people. In addition to Helminths, *Giardia*, *Cryptosporidium*, *Baylisascaris* tapeworms and other parasites can cause diseases in humans.

Because of reports like these, veterinary clinics are taking a more and more vigorous and pro-active approach to parasite control in pets. Checking stool samples early and often, using monthly parasite preventatives year round, and encouraging fecal examination for intestinal parasites at least annually are some of the ways you can prevent disease in your family members as in your family pets.

Don't panic, effective parasite control measures are readily available, but be sensible. The most important part of parasite control is to identify the enemy! Bring a stool sample with you for your puppy's first visit to the veterinarian. Stool samples should be collected when they are fresh and stored in the refrigerator until they can be brought to the hospital. DO NOT freeze them. A teaspoon or two is all that is necessary.

If a stool sample from your puppy is found to be positive for worms, the veterinarian will pre-scribe an effective wormer. Please weigh your puppy before picking up wormer, to ensure proper dosage. Stool samples may need to be checked again 4 and 8 weeks after the final worming, to ensure that your puppy is not being reinfested by his or her environment. For prevention of internal parasites, remove fecal material from your yard regularly and dispose of it.

So that you may better understand the problems internal parasites may cause, and what signs to look for, we have included a short description of the six most common types of intestinal parasites.

ROUNDWORMS . . .

are the most common type of intestinal worm. They are 2-4 inches long and resemble strands of spaghetti. They live in the small intestine, and may cause vomiting, diarrhea or weight loss. Larval worms also damage the liver and lungs while migrating through these organs on their way to the small intestine. Roundworms are transmitted via stools of other infected dogs or cats, or through the uterus of the mother dog to her unborn pups. Entire

Female kittens and puppies are born with roundworm larvae already encysted in the uterus, waiting to migrate into future offspring. Encysted larvae are one way even indoor cats can become positive for intestinal parasites. These dormant larvae can awake and reinfest a pet years later. Encysted larvae are resistant to the dewormers currently available.

worms can sometimes be seen in the stools or vomitus of infested animals.

HOOKWORMS . . .

are half inch long worms which attach to the lining of the small intestine, causing blood loss and diarrhea. Puppies can become infected through the mother's uterus before birth, or via her milk after birth. Older animals acquire hookworms through skin contact with the stools of other dogs or cats.

Hookworm larvae get into a new host by burrowing into the skin. In people they can cause an unsightly rash on the face, feet or wherever they have entered the body. Do your children go outside in bare feet?

WHIPWORMS . . .

live in the large intestine. They are not as common as the other intestinal parasites but the disease they cause can be very serious. Bloody diarrhea and weight loss are the symptoms seen. These worms are transmitted by ingestion of the stools of infested animals.

TAPEWORMS . . .

live in the small intestine, where the head attaches to the intestinal wall and produces a chain of segments. Mature segments containing eggs are passed with the stool, or may be seen around the rectum. They resemble small grains of rice. They may be acquired by the ingestion of rodents or birds or, most commonly, through the ingestion of fleas. Flea control is essential to control tapeworm infestation.

COCCIDIA . . .

are one celled protozoal parasites, more like bacteria rather than "worms". Puppies can pick these up from their mother and they can also be acquired by eating rabbit or other wildlife droppings. They are treated with antibiotics.

GIARDIA . . .

are also protozoans. They are very difficult to pick up on a regular stool check. Antibiotics or special wormers kill them but they are difficult to eradicate completely and often flare up with stress or other intestinal problems. They are contagious to humans and cause vomiting and diarrhea in both people and pets.

HEARTWORMS . . .

are a deadly parasite carried by mosquitoes. By blood testing your dog each spring and giving preventative medication throughout the mosquito season you can save your dog from needless suffering and death. [Click here for more information about heartworms.](#)

One of the parasites that veterinarians see frequently in puppies is the water-borne protozoal parasite *Giardia*. A vaccine is now available to protect dogs from this disease, and a cat vaccine is under development. Puppies living in kennels and dogs who swim in lakes, ponds or streams are at highest risk. Consider providing this vaccine to your dog if you plan on breeding her or if he or she goes swimming.

PUPPY LEARNING AND SOCIALIZATION

The first months are the most important months in your new puppy's life. During this time your puppy is growing at a phenomenal rate - both mentally and physically. The experiences he has now will shape his outlook and his personality for the rest of his life.

The period between 8 and 12 weeks of age is called the socialization period. Your puppy learns during this time how to relate to people and to other animals. Good experiences with people and other dogs will help foster a lifetime of positive interactions, and minimize the risks of problems with fighting, biting and other problem behaviors.

Shyness has the highest heritability factor of all behaviors. Eye and hair color are examples of heritable traits. Religion would be an example of a non-heritable trait in humans.

Fear of unfamiliar things is an adaptive trait in the wild, and it is also a dominant gene, so it is difficult to get rid of by breeding. Shyness is responsible for a large percentage of dog bites.

Take your puppy with you to busy places and introduce him to lots of strangers, children and other pets. (Make sure you know that any other dogs your puppy interacts with are current on their vaccinations!)

Give him lots of praise and petting when he is friendly and interested. Frequent short trips in the car will accustom your pup to traveling. You can also bring him in to the veterinary office on a weekly basis for treats and attention and he will be happier to visit there for the rest of his life!

You don't need to worry that all this socialization will make your dog a poor watch

dog. Most older

puppies learn on their own to bark at the doorbell or a knock from a stranger. What you don't want is a dog that bites the furnace repair man or your children's friends. Positive social interaction leads to positive relations with people later in life. So spend the extra time now while he's young and reap a lifetime of reward in good behavior!

The other important lesson to teach your puppy at this age is his place in the "pack". Dogs are pack animals - they socialize in small groups and have a definite hierarchy that tells each dog his status as a pack member. A dominant dog is in charge.

Your puppy will come to see your household members, be they people or other dogs or both, as the members of his pack. The number one rule to remember is that your dog should NEVER be the dominant member of his pack! YOU are the one in charge. You have the right to tell your dog to sit or stay or come. You are the one who decides when it's time to eat, to get the nails trimmed or to go to the veterinarian for a shot.

Your puppy must learn now where it's place is in your household. MORE ANIMALS ARE PUT TO SLEEP BECAUSE OF BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS THAN ANY OTHER REASON. A primary factor in behavior problems is dominance behavior.

Stress means change. Stress can be positive or negative. Animals (and people) need a certain amount of stress and change to adapt and grow.

SO WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO TO AVOID THESE PROBLEMS?

Whether you own your dog as a pet, to show, to hunt or for protection, your dog requires formal training. An unruly pet is not a pleasure to live with. Proper training teaches your dog his position and duties as a member of the household, and also serves as an outlet for his energy. It teaches your pet to accept frustration and attain patience, and it creates a love and bond between animal and human that is impossible to duplicate any other way.

Obedience is simply a repetition of exercises for both dog and handler resulting in a unified team. The owner will learn to control the dog both by voice and on leash. Training can start when your puppy is very young, by teaching the basic commands of "sit" and "come".

Sit is the simplest thing to teach.

The difficult thing is to teach when to quit sitting! The goal is to teach that sit means to sit until you give permission to get up. Say your pet's name and then the command "sit" while tilting his chin up and at the same time pressing gently down on the rump. Do this whenever your puppy wants attention or play and he will quickly learn the command. You should soon be able to forego pressing on the back end, and substitute an over-the-head motion with one hand.

Your pet should follow this movement and tip his head up while starting to sit down. This over-the-head motion is the hand signal for sitting.

The instant he sits, praise and pat the chest and throat. After about 5 seconds of sit, say "OK" and step away to communicate that your pup can now move out of the sitting position. Crouch down and praise and then keep repeating the entire procedure until sitting is achieved on the first command. Do short sessions, gradually lengthening the time of sitting. If your dog starts to get up, repeat the word sit and use the hand motion over his head to restore the sitting position.

If your puppy starts to lie down by your side as the duration of the sit increases, do not correct him at first. It is the duration of the sitting you want to concentrate on at first. Once five minutes of sitting has been achieved you may then stop the lying down behavior by using your hand motion to correct it the instant the puppy shows a sign of beginning to lie down. Be patient and consistent. Weeks are necessary to build up to a consistent sit.

To teach "come"

To teach "come" take your pup to an area that is fairly open and free of distractions. Go to the center of the area and watch the puppy closely. The instant he takes his eyes off you, call: "Spot, COME!" Immediately crouch down, turn sideways to the puppy, clap your hands and gleefully praise; "Good dog, Good dog, Good dog." Keep up the praise and clapping until Spot comes all the way to you. Pet sincerely but briefly. Then stand up and step away behind the puppy.

If his attention does not stay on you, instantly call "Spot, COME" again and repeat the entire procedure. If Spot gets distracted, repeat the call and the praise-crouch procedure. Continue until Spot will not leave you no matter where you walk. Then stop that teaching session. Do not hold another for at least two-and-a-half hours. Hold three daily sessions at the most for six weeks, varying the location and increasing the amount of noise and distractions as you progress.

Puppies less than 14 weeks of age who growl (other than during active playtime) warrant serious attention. They have very dominant tendencies, and without exceptionally good training, may grow up to have serious behavior problems.

Socialization begins in the womb. Stress on the mother leads to changes in hormone levels, which lead to changes in the puppies. This is probably true for cats as well.

Varied and complex environments lead to increased brain development. Pet shop or puppy mill puppies and kittens often have a lack of neurological development as a result of lack of stimulus. Breeders should expose puppies and kittens to varied stimuli – different people, floor surfaces, noises, etc. The critical period for this is 5-7 weeks of age, before most new owners acquire their pets.

Leash training

Leash training is another skill your puppy can start learning early on. Start by introducing him to the collar - most puppies will scratch at it at first. Give him a few days to adjust before moving on to the leash.

You probably wouldn't like it if someone 20 times your size suddenly slapped a collar around your neck and started dragging you around. Be gentle and patient at first with leash walking. Let the puppy drag the leash around at first. (Don't let him get tangled or choke himself.)

Once he's not bothered by the leash, take him out in the yard and let him walk you for a few sessions, 10 minutes or so in length. Work gradually up to leading the puppy, with lots of praise and encouragement when he follows you and gentle tugging to get him moving. Don't expect a great deal of success at first, but with time and patience most dogs soon come to love their outings with their owner. Beginning leash sessions should be short and fun.

Don't walk on sidewalks or pavement at first as this is hard on a little puppy's soft bones and joints. Do your first leash walking on the grass.

To teach your puppy you are the leader

To teach your dog you are the leader make sure that as you go about your business at home you are ahead of your dog. With dogs, the leader of the pack goes in front. To avoid teaching your dog that it is the leader of your household pack, you must be the one in front. Each time the opportunity comes up, such as when the doorbell rings, mealtimes, going outdoors or when you leave the room, try this exercise: Whenever the puppy starts to go ahead of you, abruptly back up, then turn around and walk in the opposite direction. The instant he starts to turn around toward you, say "Good dog" and keep moving until it reaches you. Then praise again and pet for a few seconds. Then, start in the original direction and repeat the process the instant your dog starts to get ahead of you. Keep up this routine until the dog follows you, or waits for your invitation to follow you.

The most difficult place to practice this exercise is at the front door, so start with the easier room-to-room times first. This exercise of turning away also works as you begin to train your pup on a leash. Turning abruptly and heading in a new direction corrects tugging forward and lagging behind and teaches your pet to follow your movements.

Handy tips for obedience

Use your pet's name only to give him a command. Use a nickname or code word when talking about, instead of directly to, your dog. This way he will not learn to ignore his name because it is used in casual conversation, but will know he needs to respond whenever you say it.

Also be sure that every member of your household is using the same commands and is consistent in their training. Everyone needs to agree on whether your puppy will be allowed on the furniture or beds, how many treats he'll get, what rooms he's allowed in, etc. If everyone is doing something different he'll get confused and stressed by the mixed messages he's getting.

Training your family to train your pet

Starting your puppy on this simple training program at a young age will prepare him well for more advanced obedience work as he becomes older and his attention span lengthens. Six months is a

good age to begin more formal training. If you have not trained dogs before, or even if you have, we recommend an obedience class for you and your dog, and also for the children in your household.

Children need to understand the proper way to train their dog, and they often derive a great deal of pride and satisfaction from participating in their dog's training program. However, children can be very cruel to small pets. Usually this is unintentional, sometimes it's not.

Children must be taught how to be gentle and patient. Too many times we see children in the veterinary office hitting, dragging around or yelling at their puppy. This should not be acceptable behavior. Toddlers should never be left unsupervised with a pet. We see lots of injuries to pets who are dropped, stepped or fallen on, and also bite wounds to children inflicted by hurt or frightened puppies.

In summary:

Starting on an obedience program early is the quickest way toward a lifetime of pleasure with a happy, well-behaved pet. Integrate obedience into your dog's day, such that it becomes part of life to him. Simply ask the puppy or dog to perform some action whenever it wants something (to open the door, play ball, get dinner, etc.) Dogs will work to get something they want, which keeps you in charge and your dog interested and occupied constructively.

We want to encourage you to devote the necessary time and energy to this project while your puppy is still young, to ensure that you have many wonderful, problem free years with your pet. A good trainer and a good training program will solve, or avoid altogether, the many behaviors that fill our nation's humane societies and shelters with unwanted pets. Your dog needs your help to learn to become a good canine citizen!

Thank you for loving your puppy with good training!

[Click here for more behavior topics](#)

THE ADVANTAGES TO KENNEL TRAINING YOUR PUPPY

There are many advantages to kennel training your puppy. For instance, housebreaking is accomplished much faster with a minimum of hassle for you and your puppy. Generally a puppy does not want to mess in the area in which he sleeps and eats. If you follow the general guidelines of housebreaking, your puppy should be housebroken within a week or less, with a minimum of cleanups for you.

If you are a working pet owner, the job of house-breaking your puppy is more difficult, but not impossible. It will take longer to accomplish housebreaking your pup because essentially you will have to wait until the puppy gets a little older and can hold his bladder and bowels for extended periods of time. However, the advantage to the kennel in this situation is the fact that all you have to clean up upon returning home is the kennel pan instead of the entire kitchen floor. Also, your furnishings, woodwork and belongings are still in one piece!

The kennel provides a safe, secure area for your puppy, away from household hazards and prohibits the puppy from destroying woodwork, wallboard, furniture, etc. You can return home relaxed, knowing your puppy is safe and so are your possessions. The advantages of the kennel trained dog are many, as you will experience as time goes by.

When training a new puppy to "kennel", you may want to line the bottom of the kennel pan with newspapers until he is housebroken. However, do provide a large towel or small blanket that you can place in one corner of the kennel for the puppy to use as a bedding area. If the puppy shreds the towel or blanket, remove it until he accepts the idea that chewing his bedding is unacceptable. To prevent boredom, provide the puppy with a chew rope, a Kong Toy stuffed with tasty treats or other sturdy toy in his pen. This should help to prevent the chewing and shredding of his bedding.

If you are only gone for short periods of time there is no reason to leave food and water bowls in your puppy's cage. If you will be gone more than 8 hours during the day you will need to keep water in the crate. Fasten the bowl to the side of the cage or use a non-spill bowl to prevent mess-es.

It is best to not feed your puppy in it's crate, as they usually have a bowel movement after eating. Meals should be fed only when you are home and can take your pup outside afterwards.

Find a location in your home where the kennel is out of the way yet not totally secluded from household activities. Never use the kennel as punishment. Do not banish the puppy to the kennel for improper behavior. The kennel should always be associated with happy, comfortable, secure feelings for the puppy.

Once you put the puppy in the kennel, do not take him out if he starts to whine and cry. If you are sure that he doesn't have to go outside, allow him to have his tantrum. Eventually, he will lie down and sleep. Once you start to take the puppy out of the kennel because of his insistence, he will insist louder and longer each time.

There are many advantages to kennel training your puppy!

As your puppy grows older, you will notice that the kennel becomes his private retreat, a place to sleep, relax or eat his meals in a place that he actually likes to be.

When purchasing a kennel for your puppy, determine the puppy's height and weight when full grown, then purchase the size kennel that will provide

your dog with the most comfortable

amount of space, yet not oversized. Kennels are available through catalogs, most pet stores, retail stores, and can sometimes be rented from your local humane society. Renting is a good option if your pup will have free run of the house once he is grown.

DO I GO HOME TODAY?

by Sandi Thompson

My family brought me home cradled in their arms.
They cuddled me and smiled at me, and said I was full of charm.
They played with me and laughed with me, they showered me with toys.
I sure do love my family, especially the girls and boys.
The children loved to feed me, they gave me special treats.
They even let me sleep with them all snuggled in the sheets.
I used to go for walks, often several times a day.
They even fought to hold the leash, I'm very proud to say.
These are things I'll never forget - a cherished memory.
I now live in the shelter without my family.
They used to laugh and praise me when I played with that old shoe.
But I didn't know the difference between the old ones and the new.
The kids and I would grab a rag, for hours we would tug.
So I thought I did the right thing when I chewed the bedroom rug.
They thought that I was out of control, and would have to live outside.
This I did not understand, although I tried and tried.
The walks stopped, one by one; they said they hadn't time.
I wish that I could change things, I wish I knew my crime.
My life became so lonely, in the backyard, on a chain.
I barked and barked all day long to keep from going insane.
So they brought me to the shelter but were embarrassed to say why.
They said I caused an allergy, and then kissed me goodbye.
If I'd only had some classes as a little pup.
I wouldn't have been so hard to handle when I was all grown up.
"You only have one day left," I heard the worker say.
Does this mean a second chance? Do I go home today?

Please don't let this happen to your puppy. There are lots of books and magazines to help you with dog behavior and training. Invest in obedience training, especially if you haven't trained a dog before. And if you have any problems or questions regarding training or behavior problems please pick up the phone and call your veterinarian or a good dog trainer! Most behavior problems can be cured if they are dealt with early.

HOW TO CHOOSE A PET FOOD FOR YOUR PUPPY

One of the most common questions veterinarians are asked is "What should I feed my pet?" Since the most important contribution you can make to your pet's health and well being is his or her daily diet, it's a question that deserves a good answer.

Think quality!

First of all, with pet foods, as with most things, you get what you pay for. Cheap dog and cat foods use cheap ingredients, have poor quality control, are not well digested and may have excesses or deficiencies in vital nutrients, which can harm your pet. When analyzed in a laboratory many generic and store brand foods do not actually contain the level of nutrition stated on the label. So, to get the nutrition you are paying for, choose a well known name brand.

Your puppy will do best if you pick one complete food that is appropriate for his or her age and activity level, and stick with it. This means a puppy or kitten food. Young, rapidly growing animals need more nutrition than adult food can provide.

Don't switch foods

Animals do not need variety in their diets. Dogs are prone to digestive upsets such as diarrhea on varied diets or table scraps. These problems usually appear in middle aged dogs, who may by then be difficult to accustom to a more healthy diet. Both dogs and cats are prone to becoming finicky eaters when fed a varied diet, causing problems for their owners later on. So don't switch foods every other week.

If you do need to change from one product to another, do so gradually by mixing the two diets together for a few days. This will help prevent diarrhea from a too sudden change in food. Don't base your food choices on what you would like to eat, as many pet food manufacturers would like you to do. Dogs and cats are color blind, so they don't care whether their food is red or brown. They also don't care if it looks like beef stew or little pork chops! The fancier the food looks, the more you are paying for unnecessary artificial coloring, flavoring and preservatives.

A dry food is best for your pet's teeth and gums, so the majority of your dog's nutritional needs should be met with a chow type food. Canned foods are much more expensive to feed, as you are paying for a lot of water and extra packaging. Many people like to supplement their pet's diet with some canned food, and this is fine as long as you pick a good one, and don't overdo it. Canned foods are more likely to have excesses of protein which can cause or contribute to kidney disease as your pet ages, as well as being worse for your pet's teeth.

Premium foods contain superior nutrition over grocery store brands. They are extensively tested and meet rigid standards with no ingredient substitutions. The finest pet foods are formulated with controlled levels of key nutrients like fat, protein, phosphorus and magnesium to help reduce the risk of such problems as obesity and kidney disease.

That is why, even though grocery store brands provide adequate nutrition for many pets, we still recommend that you feed your pet the best you can buy. Not only are you getting better nutrition for your pet, but the daily cost to you is often not any greater than if you were feeding a cheaper brand. Better foods may cost more per bag, but the superior nutrition and better digestibility of these foods means you feed less per day, you clean up less stool later, and your veterinary bills for nutritionally related diseases will be less as well.

What about treats?

Most dog owners feed treats to their dogs, as well as their regular food. Treats are rarely "complete and balanced", and are often loaded with salt, fat, artificial colorings and preservatives, all of which comprise "junk food" for animals. This is especially bad for young puppies, who are growing rapidly and need the best nutrition they can get.

A daily vitamin and some biscuits every day will not harm your pet unless it has a diet related disease, but it's best to give these items in moderation. Stick with a crunchy biscuit type of treat made for puppies, or feed pieces of your puppy's regular food.

Read labels before you buy. What level of fat, protein and salt is present in the snack? Is it similar to the puppy food you are feeding?

Be careful with rawhide chews and bones. They often cause vomiting and diarrhea in puppies. Your puppy's small, baby teeth can also fracture from chewing on something as tough as a rawhide. Check rawhide treat labels, and stay away from brands not made in the USA. Foreign manufacturers are allowed to use formalin as a preservative in these chews, which is harmful to pets.

Supplements & Calories

Do not give any vitamin or mineral supplements to your dog or cat without your veterinarian's advice. These types of supplements can easily cause harmful nutrient excesses.

Puppies and kittens need lots of calories to grow on, and plenty of fresh water. Until they are 4 months old, feed at least three meals a day, giving as much as the animal will consume in a ten to fifteen minute feeding. It's much easier to housebreak a puppy if you feed him or her at set times every day. Puppies will then have regular, predictable potty times as well.

Frequency

Once your young dog is 4 months old, you can usually cut back to two meals per day, and at 6 months you can reduce that to one meal per day if desired. We recommend delaying a little longer in large breeds of dogs, which may still be growing rapidly at 6 months of age. Continue to feed a diet made for puppies until your dog is 1 year old - again, go longer for large dogs, who won't be mature until 15-18 months of age.

The most important daily contribution you will make to your pet's health is his or her diet. So choose wisely, and feel free to consult with us about any nutritional questions you may have.

YOUR PUPPY'S SPAY OR NEUTER SURGERY

Many people have questions about various aspects of their pet's surgery and we hope this handout will help. It also explains the decisions you will need to make before your pet's upcoming surgery.

Is The Anesthetic Safe?

Today's modern anesthetics and anesthetic monitors have made surgery much safer than in the past. Your veterinarian will want to do a thorough physical exam on your pet before administering anesthetics, to ensure that a fever or other illness won't be a problem. They may also adjust the amount and type of anesthetic used depending on the health of your pet.

[Click here for more information on anesthesia in pets.](#)

Pre-anesthetic blood testing . . .

is important in reducing the risk of anesthesia. Every pet needs blood testing before surgery to ensure that the liver and kidneys can handle the anesthetic. Even apparently healthy animals can have serious organ system problems that cannot be detected without blood testing. If there is a problem it is much better to find it before it causes anesthetic or surgical complications!

Animals that have minor dysfunctions will handle the anesthetic better if they get IV fluids during surgery. If serious problems are detected, surgery can be postponed until the problem is corrected. Many clinics include pre-anesthetic blood testing with every spay and neuter surgery.

It is important that surgery be done on an empty stomach, to reduce the risk of vomiting under and after the anesthesia. You will need to withhold food for at least 8 hours before surgery. Water can usually be left out until the morning of surgery.

Will My Dog Have Stitches?

This will depend on the protocol your veterinarian uses for surgery. For many surgeries veterinarians use absorbable sutures underneath the skin. These will dissolve on their own and do not need to be removed later. You will only need to keep an eye on the incision for swelling or discharge. Most dogs do not lick excessively or chew at the incision, but this is an occasional problem you will also need to watch for.

You will also need to limit your pet's activity level for a time and no baths are allowed for the first 10 days after surgery.

Will My Dog Be In Pain?

Anything that causes pain in people can be expected to cause pain in animals. Dogs may not show the same symptoms of pain as people do - they don't usually whine or cry - but you can be sure they feel it. Some veterinarians use local anesthetics on the incision site to keep your pet more comfortable for the first few hours after surgery. It is also a good idea to start your pet on an oral pain reliever/anti-inflammatory about 24 hours prior to surgery, to lessen the risk of discomfort and swelling. Pain medications are more effective if they are started before the painful event actually occurs. Medication may then be continued for four to five days after the surgery as well. Ask your veterinarian for medication for pain if it is not offered.

Remember that spaying and neutering are major surgeries. Providing pain relief is a humane and caring thing to do for your pet.

What Other Decisions Do I Need To Make?

While your pet is under anesthesia is the ideal time to perform other minor procedures such as nail trimming, ear cleaning or implanting an ID microchip. For pets six to eight months old this is also an ideal time for a fluoride treatment of the new adult teeth, to help strengthen the enamel and lessen dental problems later on. You may be asked about these extra procedures when you bring your pet in. It is good to decide on these items ahead of time. This is especially important if the person dropping the pet off for surgery is not the primary decision maker for the pet's care.

When you bring your pet in for surgery, your pet's vet may need 5-10 minutes of time to fill out paperwork and make decisions on the blood testing, fluoride and other extra options available. When you pick up your pet after surgery you can also plan to spend about 10 minutes to go over your dog's home care needs. Your veterinarian or a staff member should be willing and able to answer any questions you might have before or after the surgery.

Keep in mind that spaying or neutering will probably be the only major surgery your pet will ever have. Take the time to investigate your options for surgery, make sure you have chosen a clinic that delivers quality medical care and look further if they are unwilling to address issues such as pain management or pre-anesthetic blood testing. Unfortunately, unless you have some medical background or experience, a veterinary client has little to go on when it comes to judging the expertise of a veterinarian in the surgery room. High quality practices offer up to date care, however, and if they aren't asking you about these items they probably aren't the best practice around. Whatever you do, don't choose a surgeon based on the lowest price! You get what you pay for. You certainly wouldn't want the low-price bidder when choosing a doctor for your self, would you? Choose the best for your furry family members as well!

Six Basic Exercises

Raising your puppy to be a True Companion Dog (TCD)

1. **Socializing** your dog to people (especially kids), other dogs, other animals, and strange noises and surroundings.
2. **Housetraining** your dog so it may live indoors instead of outdoors and in your home instead of at a humane society or in a dog kennel. If you expect your puppy dog to live under your roof with your rules, you must first spend the time to teach it the rules.
3. Creating a **chewtoy habit** so your dog is occupied chewing chewtoys, rather than unprofitably destroying furniture, or barking, or digging in the garden. Choose several durable chewtoys for your puppy to stimulate constant interest. Choose chewtoys with hollow insides in which you can stuff with yummy treats to aid in maintaining interest.
4. Teaching **settle down and shush** so that little quiet moments become an integral part of your dog's day and are immediately available upon request.
5. Teaching your dog to **sit** on command willingly, promptly and reliably so that amongst many other things, it does not jump on people.
6. Teaching your dog **not to pull on leash**, so that you and your dog may enjoy many long walks together. This also helps when allowing and encouraging children to walk the dog.

--Dr. Ian Dunbar's "Good Little Dog Book"

Settle Down and Shush

Excerpt taken from Dr. Ian Dunbar's 'Good Little Dog Book'

Right from the outset, make frequent little quiet moments part of your dog's daily routine. Remember, a puppy is not like an irritating child's toy. You can't simply remove the batteries from a rambunctious adolescent dog. Instead you must learn how to 'turn the dog off'.

When playing with your puppy have it settle down and shush every couple of minutes. To begin with, have the pup lie still for just two seconds before letting it play again. Use a release command, such as 'Free Dog', 'At Ease', 'Go Play'. After a minute, interrupt the play session again with a three second quiet-moment. Then try for four seconds. Then five, eight, ten and so on. By alternating 'Settle Down' with 'Free Dog' it becomes progressively easier to get your puppy to settle down quickly.

Once your pup gets the picture, the exercise may be profitably practiced on walks. When walking round the block, periodically have your puppy settle down for just a few seconds before resuming the walk. An entertaining way to train is to instruct the pup to settle down every forty feet or so, while you read an article from the newspaper, or a page from a good book.

With the above exercises, your puppy will learn to settle down quickly following a single command, no matter how excited or distracted it may be. Moreover, your dog settles down willingly and happily because it knows being told to lie down is not the end of the world, nor necessarily the end of the walk. Rather, your dog has learned 'Settle Down' is just a relaxing time-out for gentle praise and petting before its exciting life as 'Activity Dog' resumes once more.

Throughout the course of the day, have your pup settle down for longer periods at home. For example when watching the television, have it lie down on leash, or in its bed, but during the commercial breaks, release the puppy for short play-training sessions.

It is difficult to have too many rules with a young pup. Teach your puppy to be calm and controlled when requested and there will be years of fun and excitement ahead. **Let the puppy play indiscriminately and it will be uncontrollable as an adult.**

Puppy Chewing and Play Biting--Driving you Crazy?

By Janie Cain

Bringing a new puppy into the family can be a fun and exciting time for both you and the puppy. This is the time for a lifelong bond to form between you and your puppy. To aid in forming this bond, it becomes your responsibility to teach your puppy the 'rules of the house'. Always keep in mind, however, that puppies are not human--they don't think or respond like people, nor do we speak dog lingo. Therefore, you must creatively yet patiently teach the puppy your rules while providing him with an acceptable alternative outlet to express his normal doggy behavior.

Normal dog behavior includes digging, barking, jumping, chewing and mouthing. Puppy chewing and mouthing can cause a lot of damage to your house as well as pain when you get nipped by those sharp little teeth! You will need to teach appropriate ways to express this doggy nature.

Puppy mouthing is important. Puppies that do not mouth and play bite as youngsters never learn how to temper and control the strength of their bites for adulthood. This can cause trouble when the puppy is an adult with full strength jaws. Your puppy will learn much quicker how to temper his bite if he is allowed to play with other puppies and dogs on a regular basis. There is no better teacher than another puppy or dog to tell your puppy when he has bitten too hard. If your puppy does not have the fortunate opportunity to play with other puppies on a regular basis, it is up to you to teach him bite-inhibition.

When your puppy bites too hard, let out a yipe or yip in a high pitched voice, to imitate what another puppy would do. Usually this sudden yelp will startle the puppy and he will stop biting to look at you. Immediately give him a toy to chew instead, and praise him for chewing on the toy instead of on you. This way you have corrected the biting without needing to punish him, and you have redirected his chewing tendency away from you and toward a more suitable object.

Puppies chew for any number of reasons. Like babies and small children, everything tends to go into the mouth. They chew because of boredom, curiosity, anxiety or stress. Puppies will also chew when they start teething. Your puppy should never be left unsupervised in the house. A puppy left unattended will most likely chew something inappropriate, costly or dangerous. If you are not able to supervise your puppy at a given time, he must be confined to a safe area such as a crate or small room.

Provide an array of indestructible chew toys for your puppy. Encourage and establish a chew toy habit by providing hollow rubber toys stuffed with yummy food and treats. Anytime you leave your puppy in a confined area, provide several different types of stuffed chew toys for him to keep himself occupied with. Since these are the only chewable objects at hand for your puppy, he will establish a chewing habit with the appropriate toys as there is little else to do. Do not confuse your puppy by providing old shoes, socks, clothing or other household items as chewtoys. Puppies cannot distinguish between old and new.

If your puppy gets ahold of an object he shouldn't, try not to chase him - he will see this as a game. Remain calm and use a sharp, low pitched "No Chew!" combined with a foot stomp or handclap. If he stops and looks at you, again try to interest him in a more appropriate toy. Don't scare or corner him - remember, **he doesn't know what he's doing is wrong and didn't do it on purpose.**

Don't just wait for your puppy to outgrow his chewing behavior. Help him learn the rules by addressing chewing and biting immediately and consistently.