

# Weight Control and Exercise for Dogs



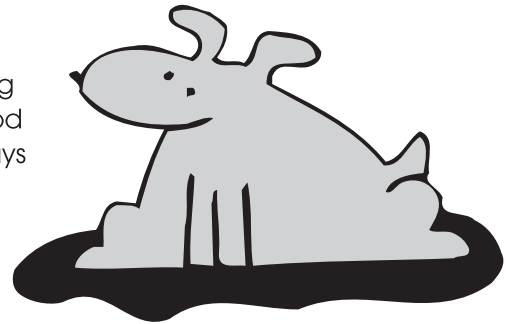
*Over half the dogs we see every year are overweight, many extremely so. Being overweight has some serious consequences for dogs, just as it does for people. In fact, the average lifespan of an obese pet is years shorter than that of pets who stay slim and trim.*

*Weight related diseases include arthritis, heart disease, diabetes, liver disease, bladder problems and many types of cancer.*

*Most of our house pets are not very active. Not only are many of them overweight but they also don't get enough exercise. This is bad for their health and contributes to behavior problems - a dog that is bored and inactive is more likely to be destructive or aggressive.*

## So what should you do to prevent these problems?

So what should you do to prevent these problems? Some dogs are better at burning calories than others, but for most dogs the recommended feeding amounts on dog food bags are way too generous. If you are feeding a good quality food your dog can eat much less than the label says and still get all the nutrients necessary for good health. Feed only what your pet needs to maintain a healthy weight.



You should be able to easily feel your dog's ribs and backbone under his skin. If there is lots of padding over the ribs your dog is probably overweight. You should be able to see his waist - his body should curve up behind his ribs if you are looking at him from the side. Looking down from above you should also see a pronounced narrowing of the body behind the ribs. Also look for bulges over the hips, a common place for excess pounds to show up.

On the other hand, if your pet's ribs or backbone are visible, or very pronounced when you run your hand across them, your pet may be too thin.

Choose a good quality pet food which fits your pet's lifestyle. If your dog is very active, look for a food such as Hill's Science Diet Performance™. If your pet is a couch potato, he needs a low calorie food like Maintenance Light™ or Senior™.

Limit treats, snacks and table food. A medium Milkbone™ dog biscuit contains over 100 calories. It doesn't take many extras to tip the scales, especially in small dogs. Avoid processed treats - they are loaded with fat and salt, and aren't even good for your pet's teeth. If you must feed treats, give



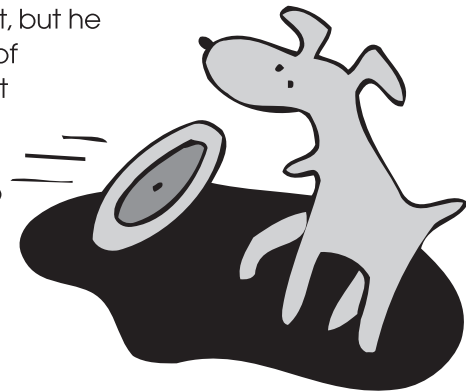


small pieces, or bits of the pet's regular food. Some dogs enjoy bits of carrot, green beans and other vegetables. These make fine, low-cal snacks.

Make sure your dog gets the exercise he needs. If your yard is fenced, let him run all he wants and if he tends to be lazy, get him up and moving with a game of frisbee or ball fetching every day. Walks are fine, although most people don't walk fast enough to give a medium or large dog a good workout.

Jogging with your pet, or swimming, usually results in better fitness levels. How often does your dog really cut loose and RUN? Probably not often enough.

If your dog is already overweight he'll need an exercise program and/or a restricted calorie diet. Most "lite" foods available in supermarkets are only about 10-15% less in calories than regular food. If you feed one of these, and give the same amount of food as you fed of the regular non diet food, your pet may stop gaining weight, but he probably won't lose any. To achieve a reasonable amount of weight loss in a reasonable amount of time you need to cut back by 25-30%. The easiest way to achieve this is to feed a prescription weight loss diet. These foods are lower in fat calories, so you can feed an amount large enough to keep your pet feeling full, while still achieving weight loss.



If you decide to increase your dog's exercise level, start slowly. Just as with people, an out of shape pet is in no condition to exercise too strenuously. Avoid heat stroke and sore paws from hot pavement by staying indoors on hot days, especially when the humidity is high. Panting is an inefficient way to get rid of excess heat, so dogs overheat easily. Also beware of too much running on pavement, as this stresses the joints. Dogs under a year of age, with immature joints, and those with arthritis, should do most of their exercising on grass.

Most pets become less active with age, so their calorie needs often go down as they get older. Decrease their food accordingly. Most senior pets benefit from a food made for older pets which is lower in fat and salt, such as Hill's Science Diet Senior™.

Please let us know what we can do to help you keep your pet in the peak of health. We welcome you anytime to put your pet on our scale or ask our opinion on his/her current weight or weight loss goals.

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2082 Cheyenne Court, Grafton, WI 53024 • phone: 262-375-0130 • fax: 262-375-4196 • [www.bestfriendsvet.com](http://www.bestfriendsvet.com)

