



OBESITY IN DOGS



Why a Healthy Weight is Important for your Dog

Depending on the size of your dog, as few as two pounds above your dog's ideal weight can put it at risk for developing some serious medical conditions. Unfortunately, **when a dog is overweight or obese it no longer is a question of "if" your dog will develop a condition secondary to the excess weight but "how many and how soon!"** Some of the common disorders associated with excess weight include:

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|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|
| ✓ Diabetes | ✓ Respiratory Disease | ✓ Heart Disease |
| ✓ Arthritis | ✓ High blood pressure | ✓ Knee injuries |
| ✓ Back injuries | ✓ Liver Disease | ✓ Vision problems |

Overweight and obese dogs are expected to live shorter lives than their fitter, normal weight counterparts. Heavy dogs tend to physically interact less with their families and are less energetic and playful. Because they tend to lie around, it is easy to overlook illnesses since we attribute their lethargy to their "normal laziness."

How to get your dog to lose weight

We understand that helping your dog lose weight can be challenging. The two biggest things that you can do are reducing the number of calories (or the amount of food) that you are feeding and increasing your dog's activity. Even cutting out 1-2 treats per day or going on a 10 minute walk can greatly increase your dog's success.

- Food Management
 - Reduce the amount you feed by 20%
 - Move food bowl around the house and make your dog "search" for the bowl
 - Feed entire meals from food activity toys
 - If your pet still seems hungry after finishing his/her food, you can add 1-2 tablespoons of canned plain pumpkin to the food. This increases the amount of fiber which makes your dog feel fuller without adding many calories
- Exercise Ideas
 - Playing fetch
 - Going on a walk
 - Playing with another dog
 - Chasing laser light

Special Rewards for Dogs

We still want you to be able to reward your dog while he/she is losing weight. Instead of food, you can substitute a favorite toy or special attention. If you would like to give a food treat, try:

- 1-2 pieces of kibble
- ¼ of a baby carrot
- ¼ of a green bean
- 1/8 inch cube of cooked chicken breast

Reluctant Patients

What about the dog that wakes you at four in the morning to be fed or the dog that stares at you during dinner or television time until you give in and feed them? Our dogs have trained us well and know exactly which buttons to press when it comes to getting their way. Here are some tips for handling the pleading pup:

- Do not use a self-feeder. Auto-feeders are unlimited food machines to a fat dog.
- Pet your dog or play with it when it begs for food. Many dogs substitute food for affection so flip the equation and you may find that playtime displaces chowtime.
- Walk your dog or take it outside when it begs. The distraction and interaction may be just enough to make it forget its desire for food.
- Feed small meals frequently – especially give a last feeding for those dogs that like to wake you up in the wee hours begging for more goodies – divide the total volume or calories into four to six smaller meals – whatever you do, don't feed extra food
- Give vegetables such as baby carrots, broccoli, celery and asparagus. Dogs love crunchy treats so make it a healthy – and low-calorie – choice.
- Offer fresh water instead of food. Many dogs love fresh water so when they are eyeing the empty food bowl, fill up the water bowl instead.

Multi-dog Households

What do you do if one dog is normal weight and the other is fat? While there are countless creative solutions to this problem, here are a few we've found successful"

- Feed separately – this is the ideal solution for multi-dog households. Feed the heavier dog its diet in one room while feeding the other dog its food elsewhere. After a prescribed time, generally fifteen to thirty minutes, pick the food up until the next feeding.
- Do not leave food out while you're away. In this scenario you can't be sure who ate what and the smart money is on the fat dog.

Another person in the house is feeding table scraps

This is a common problem. While frustrating, there are a few things that you can try

- Put your dog in a separate room during your meal times. If your dog is not in the room next to the table, it is much more difficult for table scraps to get to your dog
- Stop buying dog treats and throw out or donate any biscuits that you have in the house. If the treats aren't in the house to begin with, there will be less of a temptation to feed.
- Mark a special bag of baby carrots, zucchini, green beans, etc. as "treats" for your dog in the refrigerator. This way, if someone can't resist giving treats, they can give something that will not add too many extra calories.
- Measure out meals in plastic baggies labeled breakfast and dinner. Then take a few kibbles out of each bag and set those in a special bowl for daily treats. Your dog can then get its pre-measured bag of food at each meal to avoid "cheating" by using heaping cups of food or just dumping food into the bowl.
- Keep the food journal. People are less likely to feed too much if they can see how much their dog is eating each day.

