

# Puppy Visit Three: Life-Long Health Care



Clermont Animal Hospital, Inc.

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## Nutrition and Weight Control

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### **Food Choice and Vitamins**

#### **Should I feed my dog puppy food or dog food?**

Until your puppy is a year old, he or she should be eating a puppy formula food. Foods created for older dogs do not provide the proper balance of calories and nutrients needed for a growing dog. As a general rule, you should switch to an adult formula dog food around your puppy's first birthday. Once your dog is seven years old, a senior formula dog food is recommended.

Female dogs who are pregnant or nursing should be fed puppy formula food. Because your dog's food must provide for all of his or her nutritional needs and energy requirements, it is important to buy the highest quality food that you can afford to feed him or her.

#### **What brands of food does Clermont Animal Hospital recommend?**

Clermont Animal Hospital recommends Hill's Science Diet®, Iams®, Eukanuba® and Purina® products, but many other quality foods are on the market. When choosing a brand of food, be sure to look for the American Association of Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) approval label on the bag to ensure that the food meets all nutritional standards. If you would like further information on choosing a diet, our staff will be happy to help you.

#### **Should I give my dog or puppy vitamins?**

Most commercial puppy foods provide all of the vitamins and minerals your dog needs; however, a vitamin supplement is a good way to ensure that your growing dog gets all of his or her nutritional requirements. Vitamin supplements are particularly important if your dog is a finicky eater, during periods of illness, or if more than 10 percent of your dog's diet is something other than commercial puppy food. We provide several types of vitamins here for your convenience. These are very tasty and make good treats for your puppy.

#### **Is it okay to change food brands?**

It is important to choose one brand and type of food rather than randomly buying whatever is on sale or most convenient. This is because changing foods can upset your dog's stomach and intestines.

Any time you decide to introduce a new food to your dog, be sure to save some of the old food for a transition period. For four or five days, mix the new food in with the old food. Each time you feed your dog, gradually add more of the new food and less of the old food. Most dogs will tolerate new foods well within four to five days; however, watch your dog carefully for any signs of intolerance during the transition (decreased appetite, diarrhea, etc.). If you notice these signs, slow down the rate at which you are introducing the new food and lengthen the transition period to seven to 14 days.

#### **How often should I feed my dog?**

- As a general rule, most puppies under 4 months old should be fed at least three times a day.
- Puppies 4 - 12 months should be fed at least twice a day.
- Adult dogs can be fed one to two times a day depending on owner preference.
- "Free-choice feeding," which is having food available all the time, is an alternative for any age dog as long as you are careful not to put out more food in a day than your dog should be eating.

### **How do I eliminate a feeding time as my dog gets older?**

When you want to eliminate a feeding time, decrease the amount of food fed at that meal gradually over a five to seven day period to help ease the transition. Once the amount fed is less than 1/8 cup, the feeding can be eliminated all together.

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### **Weight Control**

Keeping your dog in the ideal weight range is probably the best thing you can do for his or her health. Overweight dogs are much more likely than thin dogs to develop a variety of problems such as arthritis or joint problems, torn knee ligaments (ACL injuries), diabetes and high cholesterol. While these are usually problems of older animals, good dietary habits must start when your dog is a puppy. In large and giant breed dogs, puppy weight is a particularly important issue. Overweight puppies in these breeds have a much higher incidence of developmental bone and joint problems. For this reason, it is important to keep puppies of these breeds especially thin while they are growing.

### **How much should I feed my dog?**

The most important aspect of weight control is the amount of food you give your dog. If at least 90 percent of your dog's caloric intake comes from puppy or dog food, the feeding guidelines on the food bag are a good starting point. Keep in mind that these guidelines are tailored to the needs of the average dog.

Once your puppy is spayed or neutered, his or her caloric requirements will probably decrease by 25-35 percent. Therefore, he or she will not need as much food. It is also important to realize that if your dog is very athletic and energetic, or if he or she is a total couch potato, you may need to adjust the amounts of food.

If you decrease the amount of food you are giving your dog, be sure to still feed your dog the same number of meals each day, but give him or her smaller portions.

In addition to controlling the amount of dog food fed, limiting calorie intake from treats and encouraging an adequate exercise program are also important in maintaining ideal weight and body condition.

### **How do I know if my dog is the right weight?**

Weight varies greatly among breeds and even within breeds. **Body condition** is a much more accurate way to determine if your dog is eating the right amount. Dogs who are in ideal body condition have a clearly defined, tucked waist. If you run your hands over the rib cage of these dogs, you should be able to easily count every rib, but you should not be able to see the ribs looking at the dog. You should monitor your dog's body condition throughout his or her life, and adjust the number of calories you are feeding as is necessary to maintain ideal body condition.

**Overweight dogs:** If your dog is starting to lose his or her waist and is developing a fat pad making it more difficult to feel the ribs, then it is time to decrease his or her caloric intake. To decrease the number of calories in his or her diet, you can start decreasing the amount food you give your dog or switch to a lower calorie diet (most pet food brands have a "light" or "weight control" formula). If decreasing the amount of food fed, be sure to make the change gradually over one to two weeks. This will help adjust to the new feeding amount without feeling hungry. If you are switching to a lower calorie diet, you may not need to decrease the amount fed unless your dog is significantly over weight.

If your dog is more than just a few pounds overweight, simply decreasing the amount fed or switching to a "light" formula may not be enough. Please ask our doctors what other steps can be taken to bring your dog back into the proper weight range without causing your dog to feel hungry all of the time.

**Underweight dogs:** If you can ever see your dog's ribs (except in large/giant breed puppies), you are not meeting your dog's energy needs and should increase the amount of food you give him or her. In very underweight dogs, we sometimes recommend using a puppy formula or a high-calorie formula until your dog returns to a proper weight.

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### **“People Food” and Treats**

In general, it is not a good idea to feed your dog “People Food,” (table scraps or other food you and your family would eat) because:

- Humans and dogs have different nutritional and energy requirements, making it difficult to provide a balanced diet that incorporates a large portion of “people food.”
- Even using human food for treats is not a good idea. Once a puppy learns to expect handouts, begging and occasionally food snatching may become a problem.
- Human foods are often high-calorie treats, which can contribute to obesity (your dog being overweight).
- Many human foods can cause health problems in dogs, such as:
  1. **Chocolate**— Never feed your dog chocolate. Chocolate is toxic (poisonous) to dogs.
  2. **Fatty meats**—Never feed your dog ham, pork, or other fatty meats—these can lead to pancreatitis
  3. **Rich foods**—Many rich foods lead to diarrhea, vomiting or an upset stomach.

**If you can't resist the urge to give your dog occasional “people food,” it is important to keep a few things in mind:**

1. Your dog's diet should be at least 90 percent puppy or dog food. All human food, dog treats and other supplements should make up 10 percent or less of your dog's total calorie intake. If this is not the case, your dog may not be meeting all of his or her nutritional requirements.
2. Feed human food in small portions. A bite-sized portion for you would be an entire meal for a toy breed dog. Keep your dog's body size in mind when you're doling out the treats.
3. Low calorie, high fiber foods are better than meats and bread products. Vegetables can make great snacks and fillers for dogs. “No Salt Added” canned green beans are a great low calorie snack. Celery, carrots, peas, and any other vegetable will make an acceptable treat for your dog.
4. Never feed your dog directly from your plate. This encourages mealtime begging.
5. Introduce only one new food item at a time and watch for any sign of an upset stomach after you give the food. If a certain food causes a bad effect, avoid this food item in the future.

### **Commercial Dog Treats**

Treats produced and marketed specifically for dogs are preferable to human food. Larger treats can be broken into bite-sized pieces for training and extra enjoyment. You will find that your dog will be more content with smaller treats given more frequently than with larger treats given less often.

Rawhides, pig's ears, and other chewable treats can extend the time of enjoyment because they cannot be quickly consumed. We recommend using only beef treats made in the USA or made from U.S. beef. If you choose to give your dog this type of treat, however, be sure that he or she is closely supervised. If your dog breaks off chunks or fragments, take them away immediately to prevent stomach problems associated with swallowing large pieces.

If your dog is on a special diet, reserving a few kibbles to give as treats is often enough to satisfy your dog's treat cravings. We also sell specially formulated treats for dogs on most prescription diets. Ask our doctors if these treats are appropriate for your dog.



## Grooming and Bathing

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*Almost all dogs require grooming and bathing at least every once in a while. In some cases, a professional groomer can do this. In other cases, you will do it yourself. It is important to introduce your puppy to grooming at an early age.*

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### Brushing and Coat Care

Long-haired dogs will require daily brushing to prevent tangling and matting. Short-haired dogs should be brushed weekly to help remove dead and loose hair. Below are some tips for getting your puppy accustomed to brushing.

- For young puppies, choose a soft brush and incorporate brushing with petting your dog at least several times a week.
  - Allow your puppy to sniff and lick the brush, then gently and softly brush his or her coat.
  - As he or she becomes accustomed to being brushed, you can make firmer brush strokes.
  - Be sure to talk quietly and reassure your puppy while brushing. Give plenty of praise for acceptance, and a treat at the end of the grooming session.
  - After your puppy is comfortable with a soft brush, gradually switch to whichever brush type you prefer. The type of brush you choose will depend on coat thickness, length and personal preference.
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### Toenail Trims

Part of keeping your dog properly groomed is keeping his or her toenails trimmed. Clermont Animal Hospital provides this services for free if you ask for it during any routine office call or surgical procedure (as long as your dog is compliant). We will also be happy to trim your puppy's nails for you for a small fee between health checks. If you would prefer to trim your dog's nails at home, we will be happy to show you how to do this.

Regardless of whether we do the trimming or if you do it at home, it is important that you work with your dog at home to help your dog become relaxed and comfortable during toenail trims. Below are some tips to help:

- Get your puppy used to having his or her feet handled. Pick up each foot one at a time and hold it for a few seconds.
  - Once your puppy accepts this, begin to hold each toe individually and handle the nail.
  - If your dog struggles, give a firm "NO" and hold tighter.
  - Do not allow your dog to "win" by struggling or crying. Only let your dog free when he or she relaxes.
  - If your dog allows you to handle the feet and toes, give plenty of praise and a treat at the end.
  - Make handling your puppy's feet part of your daily routine, and soon your puppy will accept it without a fuss.
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### Bathing your Puppy

#### How often should I bathe my puppy?

Most puppies do not need to be bathed on a regular basis. If shampoos are used too frequently, they can cause a dry coat and flaky skin. For this reason Clermont Animal Hospital recommends that you do not bathe your dog more frequently than once every month. Most dogs will only truly need a bath

after playing in the dirt or rolling in something foul-smelling. Below are some tips for bathing your dog.

- Be sure to choose a shampoo that is designed for dogs. If your dog needs to be bathed more frequently than once a month we can recommend special shampoos that will not dry his or her skin as much.
- Dogs under 6 months or 25 pounds should not be bathed during cool weather unless they are thoroughly dried afterward.
- To help your puppy learn to accept bathing, you should:
  - Only bathe your puppy inside in a tub or sink with warm (not hot) water.
  - Allow your puppy to sit in the warm water for a few minutes to adjust to it before starting the bathing process.
  - Talk to him or her in a comforting tone. If he or she tries to escape the tub hold him or her firmly in place but talk in reassuring and firm (but not) angry tones.
  - Once he or she has had time to adjust to the water use a dipper or cup to gently pour water over your puppy's back. Be sure to avoid the face.
  - Rub in the shampoo while continuing to use soothing words, and then rinse gently, again avoiding the face.
  - If the face needs to be cleaned, do this with a sponge or soft cloth—most dogs do not like water in their face.
  - When you are all through, drain the tub and give your dog a “SHAKE” command while holding a towel out to protect yourself from the spray.
  - Towel your dog dry gently but firmly.
  - If you are using a hair dryer to further dry your dog, be sure to set it on the coolest setting. Hair dryers are noisy and often scare young dogs. If your dog is not used to the hairdryer, your may want to introduce him or her to it before the first bath to prevent one stressful event from following another.

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## Ear Care

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*Many dogs are prone to ear infections. By training your dog to accept ear examination and cleaning while his or her ears are healthy, it will be much easier to treat any ear infections that occur later in life. Cleaning your dog's ears once a week will also help decrease the chances of infection, particularly if your dog is a high-risk breed.*

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### **Routine Ear Examination and Cleaning**

To train your dog to accept ear care, it is best to follow a step-wise program of gradual progression. Do not move on to the next step until both you and your dog are comfortable with the step before it.

1. Start by gently playing with your dog's ears. If he or she allows this without a fuss give plenty of praise. If he or she tries to toss his or her head and squirm, continue to gently play with the ears while talking soothingly. Once your puppy relaxes, give praise and stop. While you are playing with your dog's ears, be sure to note if there is any odor, waxy buildup or redness/inflammation. These are signs of infection. Contact Clermont Animal Hospital if you notice any of these things.
2. As soon as your puppy accepts you playing with his or her ears without a fuss, start using a dry cotton ball to gently wipe the inside of the ear. Wipe all the inside parts that are readily accessible.
3. Once your dog tolerates dry wiping, add a general ear cleaner (available through our hospital). You can either squirt the cleaner directly on the ear or wet the cotton ball with it. Wipe all parts of the ear as before.
4. Once your dog is accustomed to you wiping the inside of the ear, gently twist the cotton ball into the ear canal for deeper cleaning. If your dog has waxy ears, squirt a small amount of cleaner into the ear canal and gently massage the ears at their base to help loosen wax and dirt. Use a cotton ball to wipe the ear and ear canal clean. **Never use a Q-tip to clean the ear canal as this can cause discomfort and potential damage to the ear.**

Be sure to go through the above steps slowly with your dog. By allowing your dog to gradually adjust to ear care, you will make it a positive experience. Be sure to incorporate plenty of praise and/or a small treat when your puppy allows you to care for his or her ears.

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### **Ear Infections**

#### **What are the risk factors of ear infections?**

Many dogs are prone to ear infections. Below are some risk factors that may make your dog more prone to ear infections. If at any time in your dog's life he or she is in one of these high-risk categories, routine ear cleaning and examination become very important.

- Dogs with floppy or hanging ears, dogs with hair in the ear canal and dogs that are born with narrow ear canals are all prone to ear infections.
- Moisture in the ears from swimming, bathing or rainwater can contribute to ear infections by providing a moist environment for bacteria and yeast to grow.
- Allergies to foods or environmental allergens such as mold, dust, or pollen can cause frequent and recurring infections in many dogs.

#### **How can I tell if my dog has an ear infection?**

It is important to identify ear infections early, before the ear becomes painful and inflamed. Below are some signs and symptoms of ear infections.

- Odor, waxy buildup or redness/inflammation

- Head shaking
- Pawing/scratching the ears
- Crying/whimpering when the ears are touched

Contact Clermont Animal Hospital if you notice any of these things. In most cases, it will be necessary for us to examine your dog before prescribing medication even if your dog has had previous infections. This is because there are different types of organisms that cause infection including multiple types of bacteria and yeast. By identifying the underlying cause, we can more effectively treat the problem. It is also important for us to evaluate the severity of the infection, the degree of inflammation and the integrity of the eardrum in order to provide your pet with the highest quality of care.

#### **How do I treat an ear infection?**

- If your dog is diagnosed with an infection, it is important to carefully follow all of the treatment recommendations. Our technicians will be happy to show you how to properly apply any medications and discuss tips for making treatment easier.
- Be sure to use all medications for the entire recommended treatment time even if the infection seems to be gone. This is very important because once the number of yeast or bacteria fall below a certain number, they won't cause irritation or signs of infection; however, unless all of the infectious organisms are killed, the infection may flare up again several weeks or months later.
- It is also very important to bring your dog back for all recommended recheck visits so that we can make sure that the treatment is working effectively, monitor the progress and confirm by cytology that the infection is cleared before discontinuing any medications.

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## Dental Health and Oral Care

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### Your Puppy's New Teeth

Puppies lose their baby teeth and get their new permanent adult teeth during the time they are 3 - 6 months old. Once your dog's adult teeth start coming in, dental care becomes an important part of providing home health care for your dog.

- The incisors are the first teeth to be lost at 3 - 4 months. These are the small teeth in the very front and center of your puppy's mouth. Most of the time you will not see these teeth fall out as they are often swallowed or lost in grass or carpeting. By 4.5 months, your dog should have all of his or her adult incisors.
- The baby canine teeth (sharp pointed teeth) fall out between 4.5 and 5 months. The adult canine will be completely grown in by 5 ½ - 6 months. During this time, your dog is getting several new teeth (premolars and molars) in the back of the mouth that are more difficult to see.

### What if the baby teeth don't fall out?

By the time the adult tooth is fully in, the corresponding baby tooth should have fallen out. In some puppies, the baby teeth (particularly the canine teeth) do not fall out when they should. If this is the case, it is important for Clermont Animal Hospital to take out these baby teeth. This procedure requires anesthesia, and is usually done at the same time as a spay or neuter. If these baby teeth are not removed, they will be a site of high tartar buildup and may result in future dental problems including bad breath, gingivitis (gum disease) and tooth loss.

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### Why is Dental Care Important?

Just as you need to brush your teeth everyday to prevent plaque and tartar buildup, your puppy's teeth need routine daily cleanings as well. While treats and chew toys can help reduce plaque formation (just as chewing gum can for humans), they can't replace the need for daily brushing.

### What are plaque and tartar?

**Plaque** is a soft, sticky substance made up of food particles, saliva (spit) and bacteria that can be removed easily by brushing. However, once plaque remains on the teeth for more than 24 hours, it starts to harden into a chalky, mineralized substance called **tartar** (this is the same process that occurs in humans).

### What happens if I do not brush my dog's teeth?

As tartar builds up, it leads to a problem called **periodontal disease**. While tartar creates cavities in humans' teeth, in dogs' mouths, tartar does not affect the tooth itself. Instead it causes inflammation or soreness of the gums (gingivitis) and a breakdown of the structures holding the tooth in place (periodontal disease). This leads to:

- Tooth loss
- Pain
- Decreased appetite
- Irritability

Because tartar and plaque contain huge amounts of bacteria, they can lead to more serious infections including:

- Endocarditis (infection of the heart valves)
- Hepatitis (infection of the liver)
- Nephritis (infection of the kidney)

If that is not enough to get you to brush your dog's teeth, consider this: 95 percent of "bad breath" cases in dogs are caused by periodontal disease. If you cuddle or sleep with your dog, bad breath is the last thing you want your dog to develop!

**Do I really need to brush my dog's teeth every day, or do I just need to do it once in while?**

Daily teeth brushing is one of the best things you can do for your dog's general health and well being. Plaque and tartar accumulate on a daily basis, so occasional brushings are not enough.

While brushing your puppy's teeth once or twice a week may be better than nothing, it will not stop plaque and tartar buildup. Not only will daily brushing reduce the incidence of all of the problems described above, it will also decrease the frequency of professional dental cleanings. These require full anesthesia, which always carries a small risk to your pet and can become costly if frequent cleanings are necessary.

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## **Brushing Your Dog's Teeth**

It is important for you and your puppy to develop a dental care routine that both of you can at least tolerate well, if not enjoy. This is a routine you want to establish for the rest of your pet's life, so don't rush the process. If your puppy is not comfortable with oral care, he or she will fight you or try to get away, making it impossible to clean his or her teeth.

To train your dog to accept oral care, it is best to follow steps in a program of gradual progression. Do not move on to the next step until both you and your dog are comfortable with the step before it.

Be sure to give plenty of reassuring words, praise and treats to make it a relaxed and enjoyable process for both of you. Remember to keep safety first. If at any time your dog shows aggression, growls or tries to bite, stop immediately and contact our hospital or your professional dog trainer for advice.

1. Start by gently playing with your dog's mouth.
  - Gently lift the lips and look at the teeth.
  - Rub your index finger along the outer surfaces of all teeth and gums.
  - Gently open your dog's mouth and examine the inner surfaces of all of the teeth.
  - Look for any abnormalities including tartar buildup, gum redness/inflammation, and sores or masses.
  - If your puppy allows this without a fuss give plenty of praise. If he or she tries to toss his or her head and squirm, continue to gently play with the mouth while talking soothingly.
  - Once your puppy relaxes, give praise and stop.
  - Start out by doing this for only 20-30 seconds at a time, and gradually increase the time until your puppy will allow you to do this for two minutes with no resistance.
2. If your puppy is laid back, you may be able to clean the inner surfaces of the teeth as well. Once he or she is used to you playing with his or her mouth, try holding the mouth open and rubbing your fingers along the inner surfaces of the teeth and gums. Do not attempt this if your dog is struggling with you at all. The inner surfaces do not accumulate tartar nearly as quickly as the outer surfaces, and it is not worth getting bit trying to clean them or making your dog dislike dental care in the process.
3. As soon as your puppy accepts you playing with his or her mouth without a fuss, start using a cotton ball or soft gauze moistened with warm water to gently wipe the outsides of all teeth. As your dog begins to accept this, gradually increase the amount of time until you reach two minutes.
4. Once your dog is comfortable with the cotton ball or gauze, it is time to introduce the toothpaste.

- Be sure to only use toothpaste designed specifically for dogs (available through Clermont Animal Hospital). Human toothpaste creates too much foam, does not have a taste that appeals to dogs and can cause vomiting. We can provide you with a sample of toothpaste to use at this stage in the process.
  - Put a small amount of toothpaste (pea-sized portion) on the cotton ball or gauze and rub the surfaces of your dog's teeth and gums as before.
5. The final phase in training is to introduce the actual brush.
- It is usually best to start with a finger brush, a plastic soft-bristled brush that slips over your finger. These brushes are available through our hospital.
  - Use this brush in a back-and-forth motion along the outer surfaces of the teeth and gums. (Do not attempt to clean the inner surfaces unless you are confident that your dog will tolerate this without a struggle).
  - Be sure to use the brush to gently massage the gums in addition to brushing the teeth themselves.
  - Start out brushing for only 20 - 30 seconds at a time and gradually increasing to two to three minutes.
  - Once your dog is used to the finger brush, you may either continue with this brush or switch to a soft-bristled brush with a handle and repeat step five using this brush (be sure to choose a brush specifically designed for dogs).

**Other tips:**

- Be sure to go through the above steps slowly with your dog. By allowing your dog to gradually adjust to oral care, you will make it a positive experience.
- Incorporate plenty of praise and a small treat when your puppy allows you to care for his or her teeth.
- While we routinely brush our teeth after eating, it may be helpful to spend several minutes BEFORE feeding your puppy to perform your dental care routine. This is because it will help you make dental care a part of your daily routine by creating a consistent time for doing it. Providing the meal immediately following your dental routine will also create positive reinforcement for good behavior. Your pet will learn that if he or she relaxes and allows you to brush his or her teeth, he or she will get to eat sooner.

**Professional Dental Cleanings**

Despite your best efforts to keep your dog's teeth clean, almost all dogs will need a professional cleaning at some point. While some dogs need professional cleanings as often as twice a year (like humans), most dogs only require cleanings every one to three years.

As part of all routine health checks, our doctors will evaluate the teeth and gums and make recommendations for professional cleanings when necessary. Since we only check healthy dogs once or twice a year, it is important for you to monitor the teeth and gums at home between visits. If you notice any of the signs below, you should set up an appointment for a dental evaluation. We can then schedule a professional cleaning.

**How do I know if my dog needs a professional cleaning?**

1. **Tartar buildup on teeth.** Tartar is a tan or grey chalky material that cakes teeth, particularly along the gum line. If the teeth are just slightly discolored from the tartar, a professional cleaning is probably not necessary. Once buildup begins it is important to have the teeth cleaned.
2. **Gingivitis.** Gingivitis is inflammation of the gums.
  - It typically appears as a reddened area of gum right next to the tooth.
  - It usually occurs in association with tartar buildup, but it can occur by itself.

- Once gingivitis is seen, it is important to take action. Gingivitis is a sign that there is damage to the attachment between the tooth and gum. If gingivitis continues unchecked, this damage can become permanent and irreversible, leading to periodontal disease (loss of bone) causing root exposure and tooth loss. If you notice red or inflamed gums, do not put off a professional evaluation.
- 3. **Chipped, broken, or fractured teeth.** Dogs of any age can break a tooth by chewing rocks, hard toys or metal. Traumatic injuries can occur if your dog is hit in the mouth.
  - While broken teeth may not appear to be causing a problem, they should always be evaluated and probed by one of our doctors.
  - If the root is exposed, it can allow an infection to develop weeks or even months after the initial injury, creating a large and painful abscess. Root exposure can also be quite painful even if an abscess does not develop.
- 4. **Bad breath.** As mentioned before, almost all cases of bad breath are due to periodontal (dental) disease. If your dog has bad breath, it is probably time for a professional cleaning.
- 5. **Loose teeth/ teeth with root exposure.** If you notice teeth that are loose or teeth with gum recession and root exposure, you have waited too long to prevent irreversible damage. This doesn't mean we can't help your dog, however. Don't delay! Set up an appointment for evaluation. Even if your dog is not showing signs of pain or discomfort, he or she is probably experiencing it. We will probably need to extract (remove) all loose teeth. Teeth with root exposure may or may not require extraction.

**What happens during a professional dental cleaning?**

- All professional dental cleanings require anesthesia. For this reason, we recommend pre-dental blood screenings to make sure that your pet doesn't have any liver, kidney or electrolyte issues and is not showing any signs of systemic infection related to the tartar buildup.
- With every dental cleaning, we use an ultrasonic cleaner to remove all plaque and tartar. (This is the same mechanized tool that is used in humans when more extensive dental cleanings are required.)
- If there are any areas where the gum has started to detach from the tooth, we check the depth of detachment and determine if the tooth needs to be extracted or if we can perform a root plane procedure to potentially save the tooth.
- All teeth are polished to decrease future plaque accumulation using a fluoride polish.

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## Preventive Care for All Life Stages

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*This section is intended to provide an overview of the typical recommended medical care for each stage in your dog's life. These are generalized recommendations for all dogs. It is important to discuss specific recommendations for your pet to ensure that your dog receives the best individualized care possible.*

### Puppy Stage (Birth to 1 Year)

#### Recommended Preventive Care

- Vaccinations monthly until 20 weeks of age as scheduled (*See Visit One: Puppy Care*)
- Monthly fecal examinations and preventative de-wormings until 16 weeks of age
- Monthly heartworm prevention year-round with flea and/or tick prevention as needed
- Baseline blood panel (usually as pre-surgical blood work for spay/neuter)
- Microchip placement and registration
- Spay/Neuter once all baby teeth have fallen out (unless animal is to be used for breeding)
- Daily teeth-brushing at home is encouraged once adult teeth begin to emerge
- A daily vitamin supplement is recommended until your pet is one year old.
- Weekly at-home examination of your pet can help you identify problems before they become severe. An examination should be scheduled whenever you discover a problem.

#### Special Health Considerations

- Parasites are a common problem in this age group, hence the need for frequent fecal testing and monthly preventative treatment for intestinal parasites, heartworms, fleas and ticks.
- Genetic issues present at birth are most commonly detected in this age group. These vary by breed, so be sure to talk with our veterinarians about what conditions may be possible in your pet. These include retained testicles (males only) and hernias (either sex) that should be corrected at the time of spay/neuter.
- Retained deciduous teeth (baby teeth that don't fall out) are a common problem. Baby teeth are not normal in puppies over six months old. These should be pulled at the time of spay/neuter.
- Upper respiratory infections, diarrhea, vomiting, and low blood sugar are common in this age group. (*See Visit One: Puppy Care for more information*)

### Young Adult Stage (1-6 Years; Giant Breeds 1-4 Years)

#### Recommended Preventive Care

- Vaccinations: DHLPP and Bordetella yearly; Rabies every three years after first booster
- Lyme's Disease Vaccination for dogs traveling to Lyme's endemic areas
- Twice yearly fecal examinations; twice yearly worming if not on intestinal parasite prevention
- Yearly heartworm test (required by law for purchasing heartworm prevention medication)
- Monthly heartworm prevention year-round with flea and/or tick prevention as needed
- Yearly intraocular pressure Tonopen® test for glaucoma in susceptible breeds.
- Yearly Schirmer's Tear Test for breeds susceptible to KCS (dry eye).
- Routine blood panel (may be as pre-dental blood work) every 1-3 years after age 3
- Professional dental cleaning as needed (Usually every 1-3 years starting at age 3-4 years)
- Daily teeth-brushing at home is encouraged. These can minimize the need for and decrease the frequency of professional dental cleanings.

- Weekly at-home examination of your pet can help you identify problems before they become severe. An examination should be scheduled whenever you discover a problem.

### **Special Health Considerations**

- Dogs with a propensity toward obesity usually become overweight during this stage in life. Be sure to monitor your pet's body condition and adjust feeding and exercise to maintain a healthy weight. *See page 27 for more information.*
- Dogs of this age should be on a high quality adult dog food.
- Allergies are most commonly diagnosed during this life stage if they are going to be a problem for your pet. These include food, flea, and environmental allergies.
- Ear infections, often secondary to allergies or water in the ears, are a common problem in this age group. *See page 31 for more information.*
- Dental tartar and gingivitis commonly become a problem around three to four years of age. Our veterinarians will check your pet's teeth during each regular examination and recommend a professional dental cleaning when needed. *See page 33 for more information.*

## **Mature Adult Stage (7-9 Years; Giant Breeds 5-7 Years)**

### **Recommended Preventive Care**

*All preventive care recommendations from the Young Adult section PLUS the following:*

- Urine chemistry—yearly
- Routine blood screen—yearly
- Twice yearly physical exams
- Prostate examine (unneutered male dogs only)

### **Special Health Considerations**

- As animals age, health problems become more common. Liver disease, kidney disease, diabetes, Cushing's Disease, urinary tract infections, bladder stones, and thyroid problems are all common in this age group. Early detection allows us to address these problems before they start to make your dog feel and act sick. For this reason, we recommend yearly urine and blood screens. These screens check for a wide variety of problems and ensure your pet's ongoing good health. Twice yearly examinations are also an important part of early detection.
- Arthritis often starts to be a problem with dogs in this age group. This may lead to decreased activity, trouble with stairs, stiffness, lameness, and/or pain. If you suspect your dog is developing arthritis, talk to one of our doctors about your dog's condition.
- Heart problems become more common in dogs in this age group. If your dog develops a heart murmur, an EKG (a test to look at the electrical activity of the heart) will be recommended. Breeds prone to heart disease including Boxers, Great Danes and King Charles Cavaliers should have annual screening EKGs starting at age seven, even if they don't have a murmur.
- Cancer becomes a concern with this age group. It is important to check your pet thoroughly during your weekly at-home exams for any new lumps, bumps, or masses. If you discover a new growth, contact us immediately to determine whether prompt examination is warranted or if it is all right to monitor the new mass and have it examined at your next scheduled visit.
- Prostatic enlargement is common in unneutered male dogs in this age group. If your dog is unneutered and finished with his breeding duties, consider having him neutered to prevent this problem. If your dog remains unneutered, we need to start doing annual rectal prostate exams at the age of seven to detect changes in the prostate before they become a problem.
- At this age, your dog should be eating a Senior formula food. Nutraceuticals and food supplements are often helpful in maintaining good health for dogs in this age group. All dogs should be on a multi-vitamin daily. Other supplements such as omega-3-fatty acids and Dasaquin® will be recommended based on your pet's individual needs.

## Senior Adult Stage (10+ Years; Giant Breeds 8+ Years)

### Recommended Preventive Care

*All preventive care recommendations from the Young Adult AND Mature Adult sections, PLUS the following:*

- Urinalysis—yearly
- Blood pressure—once; repeat as warranted
- EKG—once; repeat as warranted (yearly for susceptible breeds)
- Chest X-ray—once; repeat every 2-3 years

### Special Health Considerations

- Deafness is a very common problem in this age group. Most dogs start to lose some of their hearing acuity beginning around age ten. More than half of all dogs are showing some degree of deafness by their fifteenth birthday.
- Heart problems now become a concern for all breeds, not just susceptible breeds. An EKG and chest X-ray are recommended at the age of ten to screen for heart problems. By catching heart issues before they lead to full-blown heart failure, we are able to use diet and medication to control the progression of heart-related issues.
- The immune system is not as strong as it once was. Making sure vaccinations are given on time and taking care not to expose your dogs to infection become important at this age. Urinary tract infections are very common, so a full screening urinalysis is recommended at least annually.
- High blood pressure is common in this age group, either as a primary problem or linked to other disease processes. Unchecked high blood pressure can lead to damage to the heart, kidneys and other organs. Because your pet cannot complain about the headache, hot flashes, and dizziness that signal this condition in humans, it is important to check the blood pressure in dogs in this age group.
- Incontinence is a common problem in senior dogs, especially females. Sometimes this can be complicated by a urinary tract infection. If your dog seems to “leak” urine, it is important to start with a urinalysis to screen for infection. Hormonal therapy may correct the problem if there is no infection present.
- End-of-life issues need to be considered in this age group. No matter how well you care for your dog, no animal can live forever. These will vary greatly from pet to pet, but our doctors will help you ensure that your pet is comfortable during the twilight hours of life.

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