



Tips for a Healthy Puppy

Congratulations on your new puppy! Owning a puppy is a wonderful experience, but also a great responsibility. Here are some things that you should know in order to keep your puppy happy and healthy:

Vaccinations

Puppies should begin a series of vaccinations at 6-8 weeks of age. In order to be fully protected, a young puppy will need to obtain three sets of vaccinations at three-week intervals. For example, a puppy that received its first set of shots at 7 weeks of age will also need vaccinations at 10, and 13 weeks of age. A puppy who has had only one or two sets of vaccinations is NOT protected against common canine diseases. Be aware that if you begin a series of vaccinations but do not return for the follow-up booster vaccinations on time, you may need to start the series over again. At Timpanogos Animal Hospital, we recommend a combination vaccine for Distemper, Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, and Parvovirus, as well as individual Rabies and Bordetella (kennel cough) vaccinations.

Parasites

The presence of roundworms is extremely common in puppies. For this reason, we administer an inexpensive yet effective dewormer to all puppies on their first and second visits. The third time that we see your puppy, we can perform a fecal flotation test to ensure that there are no resistant roundworms. Our routine puppy dewormer does not kill tapeworms, which dogs may get from catching mice or birds. If you see small white rice-like segments near your pet's perineum, we can prescribe a different dewormer for this problem.

Spaying/Neutering

Pets should be spayed or neutered after they have completed all of their vaccinations, around 4-5 months of age. It is best to wait until your puppy has had all of his vaccinations because this will reduce the possibility of your puppy contracting an infectious disease while hospitalized or recovering from surgery.

It is strongly recommended that a female dog be spayed prior to her first heat cycle. A female dog that is spayed before her first heat cycle has virtually no chance of developing mammary tumors during her life. This benefit is reduced each time that she goes through a heat cycle. Spaying also prevents uterine infections, unwanted pregnancies, and the bleeding, mess, and trouble of other dogs coming around when she is in heat.

Neutering male dogs reduces urine marking, inter-male aggression, fighting, and roaming. Decreasing the roaming instinct helps keep pets closer to home, and minimizes their chances of getting lost or hurt. Neutering male dogs greatly reduces the incidence of common problems such as prostate disease, tumors on the anus, and perineal hernias.

Feeding

We recommend that puppies be fed Science Diet Growth food (or another high-quality puppy food such as Eukanuba or Iams) until they are ten months to one year of age. Large breed dogs should be fed Science Diet Large Breed Growth formula, which can aid in controlling the growth rate of large dogs and help lessen the severity of orthopedic problems such as hip dysplasia.

Puppies should be fed meals, and not free choice. This method makes housebreaking easier (because bowel movements will occur at regular times), gives you better control of eating habits and rate of growth, and helps prevent obesity.

Generally, we recommend that puppies be fed four times daily until they are three months of age, three times daily until they are six months old, then twice daily until they are approximately one year of age. During each feeding session, allow the puppy to eat for 5-10 minutes and then remove the food. Adult dogs are generally fed once per day, based upon their weight and activity levels.

