

Canine Diet and Exercise Program for Weight Reduction

It is recommended that before beginning any program that you consult with your veterinarian to discuss health risks and/or conditions that may restrict your dog's activity. Keep in mind we are not veterinarians.

Studies indicate that there are 41.2 million dogs in the US and 17 million (40%) are overweight to obese. A study done by Pfizer Animal Health, has found that veterinarians consider 47% of their patients are overweight to obese, while only 17% dog owners feel the same about their pets. In Fact, obesity is the 4th leading cause in deaths today for canines and with the cost for medical care for conditions relating to overweight dogs is over \$14 million a year, as this contributes to very serious health and medical conditions.

"Obesity is an important medical condition, and research shows that it can be associated with a host of serious health problems including osteoarthritis, cardiovascular disease and respiratory conditions," said George Fennell, Vice President, US Companion Animal, and Pfizer Animal Health. "

What Is Dog Obesity? Obesity is defined as an accumulation of body fat stored beneath the skin and around the internal organs which is considered to be above normal to the point where the body functions are impaired. Canine obesity is a problem that develops gradually and many pet owners often do not notice until the dog is utterly overweight. Being overweight is the prelude to obesity which affects the overall health and well-being of dogs by predisposition them to potentially serious diseases. Obesity can also worsen the sign associated with pre existing diseases such diabetes and osteoarthritis, while impacting a dog's quality of life by making exercise and play more difficult or even impossible.

Recognition of obesity in the family dog is sometimes difficult. Often owners may think their companion is large boned, has a thick coat or looks best when plump. In addition, weight loss can be difficult for many owners to achieve in their dogs. Diet and exercise - the traditional approaches to weight loss - can be effective if followed. However, many dog owners experience frustration with these measures because of lack of time to exercise their dogs, and difficulty restricting food and treats.

Cause of canine obesity. The answer is simple: Too much food and too little exercise. We live in a world where time is a commodity and we are challenge to find "time" to ensure our pets get adequate exercise. Obesity in adult dogs is mainly due to overfeeding, eating treats and table scraps between meals, inadequate exercise, failing to reduce calorie intake as adolescent dogs outgrown their puppy hood. For sterilized, hormonal imbalance, and senior dogs, it's a slightly different scenario as I explain in further details here:

Breed/Genetic: Some smaller breeds, such as: Basset Hounds, Cocker Spaniels, Chihuahuas, Dachshunds, Pugs, Miniature Schnauzers, and larger breeds: Labrador Retrievers, Golden Retrievers, and Collies are more likely to be obese. Regardless of breed, you may still have difficulty with weight.

Sterilization: Weight gain occurs naturally after sexual maturity. After sterilization, hormonal changes that can decrease in the metabolic rate by about 20%. Therefore, the dogs' activity level decreases while their calorie intake remains the same. To maintain proper weight, you may need to adjust diet and exercise.

Hormonal Abnormalities: Endocrine diseases like hypothyroidism (thyroid gland doesn't produce sufficient hormones) and hyperadrenocortism a.k.a Cushing's disease (too much adrenal hormone is produced) may result in obesity.

Age: Obesity can become a problem of middle-aged and senior dogs as their activity level decreases and their metabolic system slows down, requiring about 25 to 30% fewer calories. Side note: it is now believed that senior dogs require MORE protein as they age, not less, and fewer carbohydrates.

Activities: Not enough exercise to burn calorie intake. Activity is a part of being a responsible dog owner.

Diet: constant (free-feeding) meals and too much of the wrong kind of food leads to obesity. Learning about Food is important factor and heavily marketed in commercial dog food and treats. Food versus nutrition can mean the difference between health and a overweight dog. Learn more by reading What's in the Bag?

What Are the Health Implications cost involved in Dog Obesity? Fat dogs are at high risk for health problems and can lead to shortened lives. As in humans, obesity is also associated with many health risks. There are a number of diseases and conditions that have been linked with dog obesity. These include:

Heart disease, heart failure, and respiratory difficulties, the fat cells clog arteries just as they do in humans. A fat dog has to work hard to keep blood and oxygen flowing, leading to an enlargement of the heart muscle which makes it work less efficiently, causing strain and eventually death. Think of that next time you want to give into begging "feed me" eyes.

Skeletal Stress and musculoskeletal problems e.g. osteoarthritis, lameness, cruciate ligament ruptures. If your dogs suffers from arthritis, in the hip, knees or back, and/or suffers from dysplasia, carrying excess weight puts extra strain on a dog's bones and joints, causing pain and suffering. Skin disease/cancer reproductive problems e.g. prolonged or difficult labor.

Hypertension, diabetes, poor immunity, susceptibility to other diseases including heat and exercise intolerance. Overweight dogs are usually in a pre-diabetic state, so urine samples need to be checked. If evidence shows of glucose leaking from the kidney into the urine, then your dog will be treated as such. For some overweight and spayed bitches may get urine scalding of the vulva and the skin around it. Canine Diabetes is a serious disease that affects you dog's ability to metabolize sugar; this is a life threatening disease. And studies show that maintaining a healthy weight lessens the effects of diabetes in dogs.

Reduced life expectancy, reduced liver function, poor digestion (e.g. flatulence)

Anesthetic and surgical complications. Aging obese dogs are also prone to develop lipomas—a tumor consisting of fatty tissue lying underneath the skin. Lipomas are usually benign; removing the tumor is not necessarily unless it becomes painful and

restricts movements. If surgery is required, your obese aging dog will face another dilemma—anesthetic complications.

Behavior implications of and overweight dog. Behavioral consequences of being chronically obese, most of which are undesirable and dangerous. In any case, the extra pounds an obese dog carries can restrict movement; create stress and strain on all their body parts. Imagine having great difficulties or unable to perform simple tasks like nonstop brisk walking for 5 minutes, climbing up a 3-steps stair, standing on hind legs leading against the window pane waiting for you to return home, and wagging his tail vigorously. It's a very sorrowful sight to see a lifeless dog.

Destructive Behavior: Obesity doesn't cause destructive behavior; instead it will result in an unhappy dog. Unhappy dogs are likely to express their pent-up emotions through destructive behaviors such as chewing our belongings and ransack our garbage for more food.

Toileting Hazards: What goes in must come out. So naturally, obese dogs will produce more waste. Having to make frequent toilet trips can put a lot of strain on their joints. As a way of releasing frustration and anxiety, obese dogs tend to have more accidents around the house.

Compulsive and Aggressive Behaviors: Since eating is their primary source of activity, obese dogs are constantly guarding their food or anyone's. Sometimes this behavior can turn very aggressive and may in turn hurting other human beings or animals.

Excessive Sleeping: With more food in the digestive tract, evidently it requires more energy to digest the food hence the overweight dogs are more lethargic. Having the right amount of sleep helps to relieve stress and anxiety; however too much of it can result in fewer calories burned a day. With less calories burned, more fats get stored, increasing the probability of greater obesity.

Non-active and Anti-social Behavior: Since most of the time are spent eating and sleeping, there's little motivation for obese dogs to want to do any other thing else let alone play and socialize. Even if the dog wants to play or just hang around in the dog park, his physical conditions may not allow him to do. Over time, he gradually withdrew himself from all forms of activities and socialization as a result he may become more destructive and antisocial.

Assessment Overview: Although dogs don't obsess over their weight, it does reflect how irresponsible we are as pet owners. It's fairly easy to recognize an obese dog. Obesity happens over a course of time. Besides having an utterly rounded body, you may also notice your dog is reluctant to play or walk unless is mealtime, and possibly pant more with a slight exertion of any kind. At this stage, you don't need this assessment or veterinarian to tell that your dog is packing way too many pounds before you begin your dog's weight management program.

Recognizing Canine Obesity: Preventing obesity is the single most crucial thing you can do to prolong the life of your dog. The first step in managing obesity is to acknowledge the problem. Does your dog have difficulty standing up or jumping? Does your dog get less than 30 minutes a day of exercise? Letting the dog out in the yard does not constitute exercise. I mean 30 minutes of heart-thumping, blood-pumping exercise.

Top and Side View: The dog should have a visible waist indentation behind the ribs. You should be able to SEE and/or Feel your dog's ribs and spine. It may be difficult to tell with dogs with lots of hair, run your hand down their sides. EVEN a stock breed should have a slight “tuck-up” (belly).

If your dog does not have a discernible waist and has a rounded belly, tail looks and feel thick, and you are unable to feel its ribs or spine, your dog is obese!

Diet: Establishing healthy eating habits, includes reducing calories and increasing quality. Feed an appropriately balanced dog food geared towards your pet's age and serve in two small daily meals instead of overloading it into one. Cut calories. Between meals, choose healthy snacks. It is important to take a slow and steady approach. Make your end goal a healthy lifestyle for your dog. Be patient. It can take months for your dog to lose all those pounds gained over the years. You can learn more about canine nutrition by ordering “What's in the Bag? Nutrition Awareness for Canines”

Ban Free-feeding: No dog should be free-fed. If you free-feed because your dog doesn't eat when the food dish is put down, they will change their tune when they see the food is picked up after 20 minutes. Besides, there are many physiological and behavioral disadvantages when we allow free feeding.

No Access to Trash Can: Hungry, domesticated, obese dogs will turn into scavenger dogs.

Treats: Commercial treats have a high amount of calories, sugars and chemicals, instead, substitute with healthier alternatives like fruits, vegetables, and dehydrated meats. Keep treats in moderation.

Reduce Intake: Obese dogs need to eat less. Having been said, you have to make sure that reduced amount of food given meets the requirement for his daily activities and sufficient enough to help to keep the weight off.

More Small Meals: We will need to control the calorie intake by feeding the right amount in multiple small meals. There are special prescription diets available, which can only be prescribed by a vet (usually very pricey and most with poor quality ingredient.) However, giving small and more frequent meals a day helps them feel full and satisfied. Sometimes just reducing your current brand maybe all you need. Albeit quality of food is key for creating a long and healthful life of your pet.

More Fiber: If your dog is on commercial dog food like kibbles, what you could do is to add more fiber into his meal. You can do this by adding vegetables most low in calories, so by adding more fiber to the reduced portion, it'll easily fill his stomach and at the same time it fools your dog into thinking that he isn't deprived of food. Furthermore, eating crunchy vegetables like semi-cooked broccoli, cauliflower, carrot or celery forces your dog to chew his food more in turn slow down his eating time.

Anti-Inflammatory Foods to Eat to Lose Weight	Pro-Inflammatory Foods to Avoid to Lose Weight
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fresh Fish: Mackerel, Sardines, Tuna, Salmon, Trout, and oily fatty fish types. • Colorful Fresh Vegetables: Tomatoes, Peppers, Peas, Spinach, Kale, Parsley, Cilantro, Carrots (raw), Celery, Garlic, Cucumbers, etc. • Colorful Fresh Fruit: Apples, Pears, Melons, Strawberries, Blueberries, Blackberries, • Very Lean Chicken, Turkey, Well Trimmed Grass-Fed Beef and Bison, Elk, Venison • Fish Oil, Omega-3 EPA/DHA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fatty Meats: Steaks, Chops, Hamburger • All Grain Fed Meats, Farm Raised Fish • All Dairy Products, and Eggs • High Fructose Corn Syrup, HFCS (see your dog food label) • Carbohydrates: Pasta, Rice, Corn, Potatoes • Artificial Sweeteners, chemical preservatives • Avoid Smoky Air, Pollution • Avoid Insecticides • Avoid Harsh Cleaning Fluids

Overweight dogs can suffer pain due to inflammation caused by the added stress on the joints we can encourage weight loss and aid in the inflammation by adding anti-inflammatory foods. "<http://www.smalldogparadise.com/k9slimdown>"

Weight Loss Supplements: If you are monitoring your dog’s food intake and exercising program you will naturally begin to see the weight come off and “diet pills” for obese dogs is probably over kill. Weight loss is a progression, your dog didn’t get fat overnight, and they will not lose it over night. You can often reduce your dogs intake simply by changing to higher a quality food which usually requires less cups per feeding than that of a substandard brand. In addition by increasing activates are the steps needed to make a successful weight loss program. Make sure water is available to your dog at all times, when in a weight reduction program water intake is helpful to flush the body and help detoxify. Obviously you can not force your dog to drink, but you can add water to their meal, or add a little honey to the water.

Exercise: Some breeds were meant to walk over 15 miles in a day, today the average dog walks less then 1. Make sure your dog gets daily exercise as it perks up the metabolism and burns excess calories. The length of walks, play time and all other kinds of exercise depends on the dog’s age, health, stamina. For example, an average English bulldog would be perfectly fine with just a 20-30 min daily slow walk. A young, healthy Lab will need a least 2 hrs of fast-paced walking or running. Most Jack Russell Terriers are almost entirely tireless. The other thing to keep in mind is the dogs age. Young puppies get tired fast, so they need many short “sprints” rather than “marathons.” It is not recommended to run a puppy until the age of one. If your dog is senior, overweight, has hip, knee, back or joint issues, consult with your vet first.

Please consult with your veterinarian to rule out endocrine or metabolic disorders first before beginning a weight loss program.

Go Slow: If your dog is not accustomed to exercise, start slow, overexertion can place extra strain on your dog's already stressed cardiac, respiratory, and musculoskeletal system. As your dog adapts, the amount and intensity of the exercise can be gradually increased. Remember to exercise your dog daily. Maintaining health requires work, time and training. In today's world it's hard however you must set it as a priority. Exercise an important key factor in any weight loss and prevention program. Taking action now can lead to a healthier and longer life for your dog. An extra 5 pounds on a dog is not the equivalent to 5 pounds to a person, for a 50lbs dog that is 10%.

Set Goals: Not only on the weight needed to come off but factor in your dog's exercise/activity routine, choice of diet, the number of feedings given, weight loss supplements, if any. These things need to be planned out before the program starts not plan as you go along. To succeed, it is best to have a log to keep track on the weight, exercise and feedings by creating a log.

The Best exercise to Burn Fat: Interval training involves a combination of short sprints with jogging in between. The researchers discovered that interval training increases the bodies resting metabolic rate and so the body continues to burn fat even after your dog stops exercising. Interval training can be done on a treadmill, infact by teaching your dog how to treadmill, can help elevate whether conditions, time restraints and can be monitored more accurately.

How to do Interval Training on Treadmill: Warm Up: Before you begin your program it is important to first get your dog comfortable on a treadmill. Refer to Pre Tread Overview, located http://dogs4life.com/Whole_Dog_Photos.html. Take the time to acclimate your dog then you can begin interval training. Beginning every workout by warming up this is important as it helps to prevent injuries. It is recommended for overweight dogs to start by comfortable walking for 5 minutes. Then remove your dog from the treadmill and add in some stretches, paying particular attention to stifle, elbow, shoulder and hips. Then return your dog to the treadmill for a fast walk to a slow jog for another 5 minutes.

Interval Training: Now the high intensity exercise begins. Increase your dogs pace, this pace will depend upon the dogs comfort level and health condition, do not increase past a comfort level or add any undue stress on the joints and bones, you must build up your dogs program. Ultimately you want to get your dog at a jog for aprox 120 paces, (1 pace equals a full cycle of all four paws.) Beginners keep at a safe level until your dog builds their cardio level. Watch your dogs breathing which should be at a regular pace while running. The cycle should be a sprint at 120 paces. Then a jog at a slow to medium pace until they have recovered their breath, which should be after about 3 minutes. Repeat the sprint and jog cycle three times.

Cool Down: Fast walk for 3-5 minutes. 8. Stretch and massage their muscles for 5-10 minutes.

This whole routine should take just over half an hour and if performed three times a week and should help burn the fat and build your dogs' physical condition.

Please make sure you speak to a Veterinarian before starting this or any other strenuous physical activity. Do not push your dog, build their endurance.

How Soon Will You See Result? For very obese dogs, you will notice significant result within a matter of days. Keep in mind, your initial goal is to keep your dog's weight off on a consistent basis. You won't want your dog on a yo-yo dieting program. The general rule in weight reduction for dogs is between 2 – 2.5% of his current weight per week. For older dogs, no more than 2%. For example, a small adult dog weighing 15lbs, he should lose about 0.3 – 0.375 pounds for that week. Doesn't look impressive, but this is the healthiest and safest way for dogs to lose those extra pounds.

How Long Does It Take To Lose All Those Weight? As to how long or fast you will see the final result, depending upon the dog's age and how obese will play a variance to the final goal. Throughout your program you should continue to monitor, keep a log and if your pet has plateaued you may need to reassess, quantity of intake/calories or increase activity and exercise program.

<http://www.stopcanineobesity.com/>

http://dogs.lovetoknow.com/wiki/Canine_Obesity

<http://www.peteducation.com/article>. Diseases and conditions contributing to dog obesity