

How to *prevent obesity* in dogs?



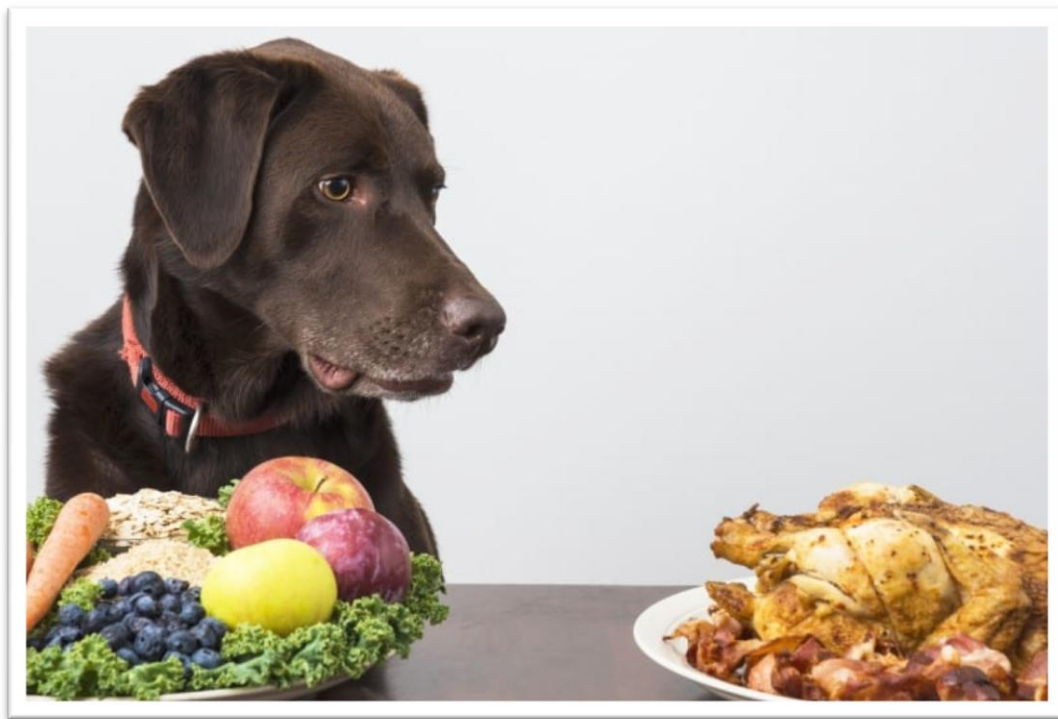
#give hope

Nowadays, pet owners have more worries than ever. Everywhere we look we see news about cancer, diabetes, heart disease, or parasitic diseases. It is quite easy to overlook one of the most common problems: **obesity**. A simple word that represents a sound base for a new and dangerous set of problems.

Any dog can suffer from obesity. Some dog breeds, such as beagles, pugs, French bulldogs, English bulldogs, and Labradors, even have a genetic predisposition toward gaining too much weight. It is also worth mentioning that neutered pets also have a very high risk of exceeding the weight norm.

How can we fight obesity in dogs?

The easiest and most effective way to control your canine companion's weight is a proper feeding plan.



Let's **start with the food** itself. What is Fido going to eat? The obvious answer should be dog food, and that's it, with a few exceptions. It's good to keep in mind that human food should not be given to dogs, especially those who "like it very much." Dogs are first-class foodies and, if given the opportunity, they would eat anything.

The responsibility to control these ravenous, gluttonous pup's food intake falls strictly onto us, the responsible owners. So, we must limit ourselves to feeding them dog food, be it dry or wet. If you have a neutered dog, go for special food for neutered dogs if you want to keep them within normal weight limits.

A good idea would be to seek a vet's advice when choosing the right type of food for your pup, as they can make recommendations based on the pet's age, breed, size, and sensibilities.



What if we want to pamper the adorable four-legged foodie living in our house? I mentioned above that there are exceptions, and no, I was not referring to the "rewards" we find in any pet shop or supermarket. These "treats" are an equivalent of fast food for dogs. High in calories and chemicals with little to no nutritional value, they are not recommended at all especially if your pet already has a tendency to overeat.

If you want to give them healthy treats instead, you can try cooking for your dog. Here are some menu ideas: boiled rice, boiled vegetables, boiled peas, boiled potatoes (all with a little salt); boneless chicken or turkey, fried or cooked; beef (meat, bones, organs) also roasted or boiled. Avoid pork completely, in any shape or form.

What is a proper feeding plan?

For puppies up to 6 months, a good feeding schedule would be to give them around 3-4 meals a day. Obesity doesn't usually appear at such an early age unless the puppy is stuffed like a turkey on Thanksgiving Day.

Depending on the dog's breed, the quantities should look something like:

- 50-100g of food per day for small-breed puppies
- 100-200 g of food per day for medium-breed puppies
- 200-500 g of food per day for large-breed puppies



Between the ages of 6 months and 1 year, you should switch to two meals a day and keep the same amount of food that we delimited above (divided into two meals).

If we talk about adult dogs, things change. From 2 meals a day we switch to one, offered either in the morning or in the evening. If you have a more active dog and take one more step toward preventing obesity, it's recommended to feed your dog in the morning because digestion is slower when the dog is sleeping.



Again, taking the dog's breed as a guideline, the recommendations go:

- 100-150 g of food per day for small-breed dogs (from 1 year to 8 years)
- 250-400 g of food per day for medium-breed dogs (from 1 year to 6 years)
- 400-1200 g of food per day for large- breed dogs (from 1 year to 5 years)

Included in parenthesis you will find the age range at which those breeds are considered adults. The “adult” and “senior” classifications vary according to a breed's life expectancy.

Because the recommended quantities vary a lot, especially for larger breeds, seek the advice of a veterinarian and decide together the right amount of food according to the specific breed and nutritional needs of your dog.



For senior dogs, the same daily quantity of food from the adult period is kept, but it is served in 2 meals (so the portion is divided into 2).

What to do if your dog is already on the chubby side?

There is no problem that can't be solved. For dogs that struggle with their weight, there is special diet food, marked with the classification "Obesity" that's created specifically to help your pup shed a few pounds. Many dog food brands have Obesity-diet foods.

Your dog's "diet" should be extensive, lasting from 6 months to one year, and it should include a daily light exercise program. These dogs should be taken on short frequent walks with a big emphasis on not exhausting or forcing them. The "baby steps" rule applies to dog diets too. With a little patience, dedication, and a lot of work, the pup will get back to a weight that's within normal parameters.



What health problems come with obesity?

Obesity is very generous when it comes to "gifts". Generally, when they start to pop up, the problems don't wait in line, but rather, they rush in. The joints are the first to "fall" due to the extra weight they have to support. The heart is not doing so well either because of the fat deposits that pile up in the chest and tracheal regions. Hepatic steatosis develops, the kidneys start feeling the heat and, of course, diabetes also pops in, to make its presence felt.

That's how something as simple as obesity can negatively affect your dog's life. Prevention continues to be a very effective way of dealing with it. As long as the dog eats properly (the appropriate number of meals and food quantity), there is no room for extra fat deposits.

Remember that there are healthy treat alternatives for your pup, from cooked food to fruits (apple, banana, and pineapple being the most recommended - always check with a vet if a certain food or fruit is safe for dogs), as long as these are just "bonuses". If you are not sure of the right type or portions of food or weight for your dog, don't hesitate to ask a specialist. It's a much more helpful and reliable alternative than following your gut or asking "Doctor Google".



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