



## NEW PUPPY INFORMATION

Congratulations on your new family member! Puppies are a lot of fun, and there is a lot that you, as a new "parent," need to do to maintain your pet's well-being. As you go through the following information, be sure to ask the veterinarian any questions that you may have.

~~~Be sure your puppy gets all the vaccinations that it needs. Puppies need to have a complete series of vaccines ("shots,") usually beginning at approximately 6-8 weeks old and continuing every 3-4 weeks until they are 16 weeks old. The required vaccines are the distemper-parvo combination vaccine (that also protects against other viruses) and the rabies vaccine. Your veterinarian can explain to you about other recommended vaccines. A bordetella vaccine is recommended for puppies who possibly will be in an area where other dogs are, such as the groomer/bather, dog park, boarding facility, or hospital (for example, at the time of spay/neuter surgery.)

~~~Early socializing with healthy puppies who are up to date on their vaccines is a good idea to help promote appropriate social behavior. However, whenever possible, be sure that your puppy is kept away from other dogs who may be sick, and from places where sick dogs may have been, until about 3 weeks after its last set of vaccines. Until this time, the puppy may not be fully protected against viruses such as parvovirus, etc.

~~~Make sure that your puppy has had an appropriate series of dewormers for roundworms and hookworms (that may cause infections in people as well) and that fecal samples are examined for other parasites. After the "puppy series," this is done every 6-12 months. You can bring in a fresh stool sample with you for us to examine whenever you come in for an exam.

~~~Return to the veterinarian every six months for your dog's semi-annual examination and any booster vaccines or laboratory tests that may be due. This is necessary for the life of your dog!

~~~Begin heartworm prevention medication when your puppy is 6-8 weeks old. It is extremely important that your dog stay on this medication without interruption, for the rest of its life. We will test the dog every year to maintain the manufacturer's guarantee, and to refill the prescription for the medication. In addition to being a heartworm preventive, most products also contain ingredients for intestinal parasite control. Certain products, such as Trifexis, also provide flea control. Ask your veterinarian which product is the most appropriate for your pet.

~~~If indicated, use prescription flea and/or tick control formulations. It's easier to remember monthly products if they are used on the same day that the heartworm prevention tablet is given. Be sure to read the label completely on any product that you are using. Some topical products need to be applied only to the neck area, while some will be applied down the dog's back (Frontline) Ticks can transmit diseases, so be sure to use appropriate tick control products if your dog lives in or visits an area where there may be ticks. The Preventic tick collar can be used in dogs older than 12 weeks old, and lasts for 3 months. The Comfortis monthly flea adulticide is a convenient method of flea control that will not be washed off when the dog is bathed. It is combined with heartworm and intestinal parasite control in the product Trifexis.

~~~Consider subscribing to Pet Insurance. Different policies are available, and some even include routine examinations and vaccines as well as emergencies. These policies are often well worth the nominal investment!

~~~Feed your puppy a well-formulated diet. Science Diet Puppy is an example of an excellent food. They are strictly formulated to meet a growing puppy's needs, without any excesses that may be harmful. Unlike some grocery-store foods, the ingredients and formulations generally do not vary, so there won't be any sudden changes in your dog's food.

~~~Tiny/ toy-breed puppies are very prone to hypoglycemia (low blood sugar.) They need to be fed very frequently (up to every 2 hours around the clock for some puppies) depending on age and size. Always keep Karo syrup or Nutrical on hand in case of a hypoglycemic episode. If signs of lethargy/ weakness, trembling, seizing occur, immediately put some on the puppy's gums and call your veterinarian or the emergency hospital immediately.

~~~If you ever switch your dog's food, do it slowly over a course of at least 5 days: gradually increase the amount of the new food

and decrease the amount of the old food until only the new food is being fed. This will help minimize the chance of diarrhea or stomach upset from a sudden diet change.

~~~Once your puppy is fully grown (about 1 year old for an average-sized dog), switch him/her to an adult dog food, such as Science Diet Canine Adult, Hill's t/d, or Science Diet Oral Care (a tartar-control diet.)

~~~Never give your puppy "table scraps." A lot of food that humans can digest without any problems can cause serious problems to pets. Giving food from the table only encourages begging, which will be a problem for you and your dog. As long as a well-balanced, high-quality dog food is being given, there is no need for supplements.

~~~Maintain a healthy mouth by performing dental home care. Now is the best time to begin training your dog to accept tooth-brushing. The size of the puppy and his/her predicted adult size will help determine which products are best suited to use. Tiny dogs, such as miniature poodles, Yorkshire terriers, chihuahuas, etc. should have a tiny toothbrush: the CET Mini-Toothbrush or the human Oral-B Sulcus toothbrush work well in these breeds. Small dogs can use the small end of the CET Dual-Ended toothbrush, or a small, *soft* human toothbrush. Large dogs do well with the large end of the Dual-Ended toothbrush, a medium-sized, *soft* human toothbrush, or the CET fingerbrushes. It is important to only use a dog toothpaste; human toothpastes may be toxic to dogs. The malt and poultry flavors seem to be palatable to dogs. If you give your puppy a reward after his/her dental care, it should not be too difficult to develop a daily routine that he/she may even enjoy!

~~~Make sure your puppy can be returned to you in case he/she is ever lost. Put a name tag with your phone number and address on the dog's collar. After the puppy is old enough to receive it, make sure he/she wears the rabies tag *at all times*. Injecting a permanent microchip under the dog's skin provides a permanent, unchangeable means of identification. The injection is like a vaccine shot; no sedation is required and it can be done in minutes.

~~~Make sure your puppy is spayed (females) or neutered (males) before it reaches sexual maturity. This should be done before he/she is 6 months old. It is best to wait until the vaccine series is completed before doing the surgery, but it can be done sooner if needed. Females that are spayed before their first heat cycle (often around 6 months old) have almost no chance of ever getting breast cancer (the most common cancer that dogs get.) After a dog goes through heat cycles, she has about a one-in-four chance of developing breast cancer, that may be fatal. Spaying also helps prevent ovarian cancer, uterine infections (pyometra), and other problems. Neutering male dogs helps prevent testicular and prostate problems, as well as some behavioral problems. Spaying and neutering is the best method available to help control the severe pet overpopulation problem that exists. If you have any questions about the procedure or why it is important that it be done, please ask your veterinarian.

~~~Dogs need things to chew on. Make sure that there is no access to any possible harmful objects. Keep all electric cords, small items/toys, etc. out of the puppy's reach to avoid electrocution/ choking/ etc. A good chew toy should not have the potential to harm the dog's teeth, gums, or digestive tract. CET Chews, *Gummabone*, and *Kong* toys meet these requirements. Hard toys may break teeth or scratch the gums. A good rule of thumb is the "knee test." If you wouldn't want the object thrown at your kneecap, then it is too hard for your dog! The felt on tennis balls and string on rope toys may rub away the enamel of the dog's teeth, and should be avoided. Toys that can be chewed up may cause stomach problems.

~~~Make sure there are no toxic substances within reach of the puppy. Old batteries, antifreeze, gum/candies containing xylitol, drugs/medications, and pennies are common household items that may be fatal if ingested. Other potential toxins include chocolate, grapes, raisins, and onions. Bufo Toads, common to South Florida, may be very toxic and even fatal if licked or eaten. If you think that your dog may have come in contact with a Bufo Toad, *first* rinse the mouth copiously with tap water (rinsing through the mouth, so that the toxin is not swallowed), *then* call us immediately.

~~~Begin now to get your puppy used to having baths, ear cleanings, and toenail trims. Playing with his/her feet frequently will make nail-trim time easier!

~~~All dogs have anal glands (small scent glands that are located just inside the anus and are used in the wild for marking.) These are the same glands that skunks have to release their odor. Some dogs (especially the smaller breeds) are prone to getting a build-up of this material, which can lead to irritation, infection/ abscess, or even rupture. If you take your dog to a groomer, ask the groomer to express the anal gland material for you to help prevent it from building up. If you ever notice your dog scooting on its rear end or chewing at this area, bring him/her in so that we can check these glands for you.

~~~Take your puppy for car rides to places other than the veterinarian's office. If the only time he/she goes in the car is to get shots, he/she may begin to fear the car. Go for short rides around the block, and give rewards during the drive.

~~~Get a book on puppies, such as the Super Puppy Handbook, and do research on particular features on your puppy's breed. You

will find a lot of other suggestions on how to provide your dog a long, happy life.

~~~When looking for additional information beyond what your veterinarian has told you, be careful when looking on the internet. Stick with a reputable website such as [www.veterinarypartner.com](http://www.veterinarypartner.com).

~~~Call your veterinarian whenever you have any questions!