



VON SteinMAIN

Puppy Exercise

Just like you, your little four-legged friend can benefit from an exercise routine. Regular exercise improves muscle tone, joint flexibility, digestion and cardiovascular fitness. Exercise also helps prevent obesity down the road, which has been linked to numerous health problems in dogs.

Besides making your puppy healthier, exercise also makes him happier. He'll be more relaxed and less destructive with a proper exercise regimen. You will need to tailor your dog's exercise program to his age, size and breed.

Getting Started

When you visit your veterinarian for your puppy's examination and vaccinations, he will check for heart, lung and joint problems and evaluate your puppy's overall physical condition. Ask your veterinarian how much and which exercises are appropriate for your dog.

Building a Routine

A healthy puppy can start with two short exercise sessions a day or more if his energy level demands it. Possibilities include a **10-minute** walk, a game of fetch in the backyard or a short swim in shallow water.

If you choose to walk with your puppy, teach him to walk on a leash. The local wildlife can be a big distraction and you don't want your pet to get away from you and run into danger.

Health Issues

When you exercise your puppy outdoors, pick areas with soft grass or dirt. Exercising him on hard or slippery surfaces can damage his footpads or lead to falls.

You should hold off on serious fitness training, such as running, until after your pup is a year old. Until then, your puppy's bones are still maturing and overly vigorous exercise could damage his soft frame. Instead, build your puppy's stamina with longer walks or rousing rounds of fetch.

To prevent heatstroke or other illnesses, don't exercise your puppy on extremely hot days. Watch your puppy to make sure he drinks plenty of fresh water daily and stop if you notice excessive panting or fatigue during exercise.

Finally, avoid exercising your puppy within one hour of eating a large meal, especially if he's one of the larger, deep-chested breeds, which are predisposed to bloat. With bloat, your dog's stomach fills with air. In serious cases, the stomach can twist, trapping the air and causing shock and even death.

How Much Exercise Is Enough?

Once you've worked up to the fitness level your veterinarian recommends, monitor your puppy's activity level. If he still tears through the house or takes flying leaps off your sofa, he might need a more vigorous workout.

On the other hand, take care not to do too much too fast. Your little friend can't tell you when he's had enough, so it's your job to look for signs of weariness, including an altered gait or heavy panting.

Go For It!

Use your puppy's exercise session to connect with your furry friend and boost his health. He'll not only release pent-up energy, he'll look and feel great!