

6 Ways To Keep Your Dog's Heart Healthy

By [Emma Williams](#)

Thoughts of upcoming Valentine's Day may send hearts a-flutter, but the focus on hearts is all month long with February being [American Heart Month](#). A whole month focusing on heart health and the dangers and signs of heart disease – this awareness should extend to the heart of your furry valentine, too!

To pay homage to both American Heart Month and Valentine's Day, here are some top tips for caring for and improving the health of your beloved dog's heart.

1. FEED YOUR DOG A HEALTHY DIET

Just like us, a healthy body starts with a healthy diet. [A healthy diet](#) plays a major role in your dog's organ function, the quality of their skin and coat, their joint health, and, of course, their heart health. Avoiding obesity is also key to maintaining heart health, so providing a high quality, balanced diet for your pooch is paramount.

For heart health in particular:

REDUCE THE SODIUM Heart problems can be caused by having too much sodium in your [dog's diet](#). Studies show that a maximum sodium level of 1.8% should be included in the diet of healthy dogs, and those suffering from heart disease should consume even less. Check the sodium content of your pup's food and treats to ensure that they aren't consuming too much.

ENSURE THAT THEY ARE GETTING ENOUGH OMEGA 3 FATTY

ACIDS Making sure that your dog is getting enough omega 3 fatty acids is a great way to support their heart health. Research has shown that supplementing omega 3 into their diet decreases the production of inflammatory hormones and can improve their appetite. According to [Tufts University](#), the current recommended dose for dogs with heart failure is 40mg/kg EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid) and 25 mg/kg DHA (docosahexaenoic acid) daily. There are very few commercial dog foods that provide this dose, making supplementation necessary. One of the

easiest ways to ensure that you are giving your dog sufficient nutrients and omega 3 fatty acids is to supplement their diet with a multivitamin. These doggie supplements come in a range of yummy flavored treats that your dog will happily gobble up every day without knowing they are being given a blast of goodness!

CONSIDER USING PROBIOTICS We are all familiar with the concept of using probiotics to support our own gut health, but the same is true for our furry friends. The bacteria in your dog's gut can influence their overall health and wellbeing both physically and psychologically, so maintaining the good bacteria in their tummies is important. Some research also suggests that an imbalance of bacteria in a dog's gut can impact their heart health, with repopulating their gut with good bacteria reducing inflammation and blood pressure. Probiotics come in easy-to-use powdered form that can be sprinkled on your dog's regular food.

2. PRIORITIZE EXERCISE

Even if your dog easily maintains a healthy weight, just like us, that doesn't necessarily indicate fitness or great heart health. Ensuring that they get plenty of [exercise](#) daily is essential for protecting their hearts from disease. Thankfully, they don't usually take much convincing to engage in some cardio! The trick can be to keep it varied for us – anything from walking, running, hiking, chasing a ball on the beach – whatever gets their hearts pumping!

3. ATTEND REGULAR VET CHECKS

For every one of our years, dogs age between four and nine years, and this faster aging can be all too easily overlooked – but, imagine going that many years without a medical checkup for ourselves! Bi-annual check-ups with a vet is ideal, especially for older pooches. Ultimately, prevention and early detection of issues is the optimal way to care for your pet.

4. DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE IMPORTANCE OF DENTAL CARE

Dental disease in dogs tends to show up between ages four – nine, and surprisingly, has a strong correlation to heart disease. The buildup of plaque and any infection in a dog's mouth can actually contribute to congestive heart failure by entering their bloodstream. Maintain a healthy routine for your [dog's dental care](#) and consult a vet if you notice any signs of problems such as sore gums, bleeding or bad breath etc.

5. TREAT FOR HEARTWORM DISEASE

[Heartworm](#) disease can be transmitted by mosquitoes and lead to heart failure if not treated quickly – and even then it can still lead to permanent heart damage. Thankfully, it is easily prevented with a simple topical product or pill administered monthly.

6. KNOW THE SIGNS OF HEART DISEASE

Most cases of heart disease in dogs develop as a result of injury, illness, infection etc. as opposed to any genetic causality. Signs to be aware of can include:

- Shortness of breath
- Dry cough after exercise
 - Rapid weight loss
 - Fatigue
- Cough that is worse at night
 - Fainting
 - Pale gums

These and any other unusual signs and symptoms should prompt a timely visit to your local vet to check your dog's health.

As you can see, there are a number of ways that we can prevent heart issues for our special pets and ensure their optimal health overall, too. And similarly, loving and caring for our four-legged friends has a positive

impact [on our own heart health too.](#)

What better reminder than Valentine's Day and Heart Health Awareness Month to ensure that you are taking great care of your and your loved ones' hearts – including your precious pooch's!

About the Author:

Emma is a professional writer and blogger, with two furry friends and a lot of pet behavioral and pet health knowledge to share. She has written for numerous big animal magazines and health sites, and is a regular contributor to [The Catington Post.](#)