

October Is Pet Wellness Month: 10 Tips For Dog Wellness

We all want our canine companions to live long, happy, healthy lives. [October is National Pet Wellness Month](#), a good time to remember the importance of regular wellness checkups and making healthy lifestyle choices for your precious pup.

There's no better way to celebrate than by making sure you make positive choices that can help your dog live longer, have increased vitality, and thrive.

These ten tips will help you keep your pup healthy during National Pet Wellness Month and all year long.

Focus On Nutrition

- Adequate nutrition keeps a dog fit and healthy and helps prevent many diseases.
- It's all about the [ingredients in the food](#) they get: high protein sources like chicken and eggs build muscle,
- and fruits and vegetables are natural sources of vitamins, minerals,
- and antioxidants that are necessary for a well-functioning immune system.

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The old axiom "you are what you eat" applies to dogs as well as to humans, so choose a high quality food for your dog's optimum health. Talk to your vet and make sure your pup has the best diet for them.

Control Their Weight

Obesity in dogs can lead to problems from conditions like [Cushing's disease](#) to skin irritations, heart failure, cancer, and ligament and disc issues.

An overweight pet has a decreased quality of life. Many pet parents overfeed their animals, and this can often mean that their pets will die at an earlier age.

Be sure your dog gets the proper nutrition, but be aware that a dog who's at a healthy weight will have more energy and better overall health. If you're worried that your dog is overweight, talk to your vet.

Get Enough Exercise

Exercise burns calories directly, but there's another benefit; it also can provide a boost to the metabolic rate that lasts for hours after the dog has stopped to rest.

Regular exercise keeps the animal's muscles, tendons, and bones strong. It also provides a measure of mental stimulation.

Spend some time exercising with your dog -- walking, playing, and enjoying the outdoors. It will do you both a world of good!

Don't Skip Dental Care

Proper dental care can extend your dog's life.

Take the breath test! Sniff your dog's breath. While doggy breath isn't normally fresh and minty, if it's really offensive, there may be a problem, especially if accompanied by a loss of appetite, any vomiting, or excessive drinking or urinating.

Check your pet's mouth -- gums should be a healthy, pink color and teeth should look clean without signs of brown tartar. Use a special dog toothbrush or piece of soft gauze, and massage the teeth or gums. Once your dog gets used to this, you will be able to brush their teeth two or three times weekly as part of a regular routine.

If you see signs of oral disease, like inflamed gums, or notice loose teeth, it's time for professional help from your veterinarian.

Brush Their Fur

Regardless of the length of a dog's fur, regular brushing is great because it removes dead hair and distributes natural oils for a clean, healthy coat while stimulating the surface of the skin.

It's also an opportunity for you to become familiar with your pet's body, making it more likely that you'll notice any changes, like unusual growths or abnormalities, that need the attention of a veterinarian.

Brush your pet every couple of days, and make it a pleasant time you share together.

Don't Overdo The Bathing

Grooming is a big part of pet wellness.

Bathing too frequently will dry out a dog's skin, so unless your companion has rolled in something smelly or gotten very dirty in some other way, a bath every two to four months should be sufficient if you're brushing your pet regularly.

Make sure to use a shampoo made specifically for dogs, as human shampoo is too harsh for an animal's skin. Be sure to test the water so it's not too hot or too cold, and rinse completely to avoid leaving a dull soap residue that can cause itching. Avoid getting shampoo or water directly in the eyes, mouth, or ears.

Learn How To Take Care Of Nails

Many dog parents are intimidated at the thought of clipping a dog's nails, but overgrowth can be uncomfortable for your pet. If you can hear the "click" as your dog crosses the floor, the nails are probably too long.

Choose a pet nail clipper that feels comfortable in your hands and gives a clean line of sight to exactly where the blade is cutting. Less is more in this case, so don't clip too closely. Ask your groomer for tips if you don't feel confident.

Dogs' nails grow in a curve, so excessive length can cause the toes to splay as the animal walks.

Regular clipping prevents this and reduces the risk of torn nails.

Check And Clean Those Ears

Clean ears feel good to your dog and are important for preventing ear infections.

Examining the outside of the ears also alerts you to the presence of wood ticks, fleas, or anything unusual.

To clean your dog's ears, use a cotton ball, piece of gauze, or a baby wipe with an ear-cleaning solution -- water won't work because it evaporates too quickly.

Wipe the inside surface of the ear, going down only as far as your finger easily fits.

Never force it, and don't use a Q-tip or put anything else further down the ear canal that could cause a painful injury.

Don't Go Overboard With Supplements

Reputable pet food manufacturers go to great lengths to make sure that their products contain the right proportion of vitamins and minerals, so adding more without first consulting your veterinarian might throw this delicate balance out of whack.

Some fat soluble vitamins -- A, D, E, and K -- are not easily eliminated

from the body and could build up to toxic levels. High levels of one mineral in a dog's diet can interfere with the uptake of another, as in the case of calcium, copper, and iron.

If your dog is healthy and eats well, a multi-vitamin mineral supplement should not be necessary.

It's always best to ask your vet if you're concerned that your dog isn't getting enough nutrients from their regular diet.

Spend Quality Time With Your Dog

Happiness is an important component in your dog's overall wellness, so don't underestimate the benefit of spending time with your best canine friend.

Left alone without companionship or mental stimulation, animals can become depressed, act out in destructive ways, or even become lethargic.

Your pet is a family member. Interact with them -- talking, walking, playing together, stroking, and giving the affection and attention they so deserve. Your dog will benefit and reward you with unconditional love.