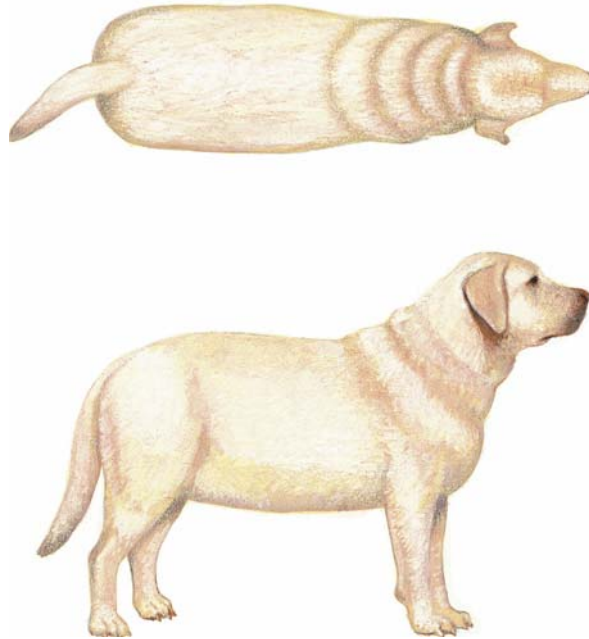


# Reducing the Risks of Canine Obesity



## Reducing the Risks of Canine Obesity

Obesity is the most common nutritional disease of dogs. Experts estimate that 25 to 50 percent of all dogs are overweight. Obesity prevention and weight reduction lessen the risks of health problems, improve your dog's appearance, decrease future health-care costs and prolong life. This client education sheet will help you learn more about the risks of obesity and will review your veterinarian's plan for keeping your dog healthy, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

## Risk Factor Management for Canine Obesity

Obesity exists when a dog weighs 15% more than its optimal body weight (is this statement true). Risk factors that predispose an animal to obesity include:

- Overfeeding puppies. This increases the number of fat cells that they have.
- Age. The incidence of obesity increases with age due to reduced lean muscle mass and reduced physical activity.
- Sex. Obesity is more common in females.
- Breed. Labrador Retrievers, Cairn Terriers, Cocker Spaniels, and Dachshunds are prone to obesity.
- Neutering. Obesity is more common in castrated males and spayed females.
- Client feeding habits. Pets fed home-cooked meals, table scraps, and treats are more prone to obesity.
- Reduced physical activity.
- Overfeeding of highly palatable foods.
- Providing pets with unlimited (free-choice) access to food.

## Effects of Obesity

Detrimental health effects begin when an animal is 10 to 15 percent heavier than its optimal weight. Obesity can shorten a pet's life and predispose the pet to medical problems. Among these are joint and locomotion problems such as: arthritis; respiratory difficulties; high blood pressure; congestive heart failure; liver disease; decreased heat tolerance; increased incidence of skin disease; increased incidence of certain cancers; increased anesthetic and surgical risks; increased incidence of digestive conditions, such as constipation; decreased resistance to infectious diseases; and increased risk of diabetes.

## Detecting Risk Factors

Frequent and complete veterinary checkups are the best means of assessing whether your dog is overweight and suffers from the effects of obesity. An adult dog should weigh no more than it did the first year following maturity. Weight gain trends can usually be found in your pet's medical records at your veterinarian's office. Your veterinarian can also diagnose and treat conditions that you may mistake for weight gain.

### Managing Risk Factors

Although some risk factors for obesity, such as age, sex, and breed, can't be altered, you can change other risk factors by following your veterinarian's advice for exercise and proper feeding practices. For example, briskly walking your dog twice a day for 15 minutes will help with life-long weight control. Routine examinations and diagnostic studies are the best ways to detect the effects of obesity on your dog's health.

### Nutritional Plan

Obesity prevention begins when a puppy is young and continues through life. Two causes of obesity are the development of too many fat cells during growth and improper feeding practices. To prevent obesity, puppies should be fed the amount of food your veterinarian recommends divided into two to three meals. They should not be fed free-choice. All puppies should be fed a growth-type food that avoids excess calcium and phosphorus, which could cause skeletal disease, and excess calories, which could cause obesity. Such foods include Hill's® Science Diet® brand puppy foods. Table food, scraps and snacks should not be fed to dogs.

As a pet matures and ages, its nutritional needs change. Optimal nutrition should provide for a pet's needs during each stage of its life. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess sodium, phosphorus, calcium, protein and calories. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include Hill's® Science Diet® brand pet foods.

If your dog is overweight, your veterinarian may give you special feeding instructions. The best dietary plan for reducing weight is a nutritionally complete and balanced high-fiber, low-fat, low-calorie food such as Hill's® Prescription Diet® r/d® Canine Weight Loss-Low Calorie or Prescription Diet® w/d® Canine Low Fat-Diabetic-Gastrointestinal.

### Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Don't feed additional salt or any snacks that may contain sodium. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

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*Presented as an educational service by*

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## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.