

# Your Healthy Pet Guide



## STAY HEALTHY

Pets benefit from preventative checkups because they, like people, can develop conditions that are serious if not caught and treated early. Visiting your vet once a year also gives you the opportunity to review your pet's weight, diet, teeth and activity level. Again, like people, pets thrive on a healthy diet, good oral hygiene, lots of play, and plenty of love.



### ANNUAL VISITS KEEP TRACK OF YOUR PET'S HEALTH HISTORY.

Along with recording dates of annual and required immunizations, an annual well visit will check your pet's weight. **More than half the dogs and cats in the U.S. are overweight or obese.** Obesity can decrease your pet's quality of life, often shortening its lifespan and leading to skin problems, congestive heart failure, cancer, musculoskeletal diseases like osteoarthritis, and a host of other problems.



### INSPECT YOUR PET'S TEETH OFTEN.

Pets can't tell you when their teeth hurt. Often, they eat differently or just stop eating. **Dental problems show up as bad breath, facial swelling, and pawing at the face.** Red, receding gums can lead to severe cavities and infections that can spread to other organs.

*Most vets recommend that you brush your pet's teeth daily and will show you how with pet toothpaste.*



### ANNUAL CHECKUPS GO FROM HEAD TO TAIL.

Your vet will look at eyes, ears, skin, fur or hair, and glands to determine good health. They may test joints, listen to the heart and lungs, and check for infections and allergies. **Your vet may also look for breed-specific health problems and consider the age, lifestyle and environment of your pet.**

Because your pet can't talk, pay attention to its behavior. Like all doctors, veterinarians are there to help you manage your pet's health. So ask questions! The goal of a wellness exam is to see you again next year.

## SPOTLIGHT

### BRINGING HOME A BABY

A new baby brings with it dozens of unfamiliar sights, sounds, smells and routines for your dog or cat to experience. And like many changes in life, a little preparation goes a long way. So before your baby comes home from the hospital, work with your fur baby so this "intruder" is welcomed or even ignored.



#### RAMP UP ON VERBAL COMMANDS.

- Use treats to practice commands such as off, down, stay, come, sit, leave it or drop it, and place.
- If your dog is a jumper, work on training him or her to be calm when someone arrives.
- Poke and treat your pet so that your dog or cat doesn't get upset when poked, which you know is going to happen.

#### LET YOUR PET SMELL YOUR BABY'S STUFF.

- Right before the baby comes home, place a used receiving blanket or piece of the baby's worn clothing in a quiet area with your cat or dog to introduce your pet to the baby's scent.

- Rub baby lotion on your hands and engage your pet in pleasant activities to create a positive association with baby odors.

#### PREPARE YOUR PET FOR THE BABY.

- Before the baby arrives, get a baby doll and walk around with it in front of your pet.
- Some suggest playing recordings of baby noises and setting up your nursery's mobile ahead of time to give your dog and cat a few weeks to explore it. That way, you can see if your cat is jumping dangerously to the mobile above the crib.

#### KEEP PETS AWAY.

- A loving pet could suffocate a baby, so close the door when the baby is sleeping or use a gate to keep pets away from certain areas.



#### KEEP A QUIET HOME.

- Screaming at your pet when he or she first meets baby may have a lasting bad outcome. Get professional help if your pet shows aggressive behavior toward any family member.
- And when the baby is napping, grab your pet for a catnap. Remember, your pet was there first and is still a big part of your now bigger family.



## NEWS

### DOES YOUR PET NEED HEALTH INSURANCE?

Most cities have 24-hour animal medical centers, veterinary specialists, and all the modern and high-tech tools in a doctor's bag or office. But these advancements up the cost of treatment for your sick or injured pet.

The last thing you need is anxiety about money if your pet is sick or injured. Pet insurance can help offset some of the costs, but don't think of it as a perfect solution. Only you can decide what's right for you, so talk to your vet, do some homework, and consider this:

- **Your Vet:** Ask if he takes insurance and if insurance allows you to choose your vet.
- **Insurance:** Review for deductibles, copays, limitations, exclusions, and if premiums will rise as your pet ages or with use.
- **Treatment:** See if insurance covers wellness care and emergencies.

## Common Dangers to Your Pet

### People are often surprised to learn what is harmful for a pet.

A rule of thumb is to take the same precautions you would with a child. Obviously, rodent and insect control products are the most common sources for danger in pets, but the list gets longer. Consider these areas:

- » **garage:** anti-freeze, fertilizer for plants, de-icing salt
- » **kitchen:** chocolate, grapes, raisins, avocados, cherries, garlic, onions, caffeine, citrus
- » **garbage:** cans, chicken bones, and any food with mold growing on it
- » **bathroom:** medications, pain killers, cold medicine, ointments, vitamins and dental floss
- » **living room:** many plants, holiday decorations, lights, mistletoe, yarn, alcohol
- » **office:** string, rubber bands
- » **kids rooms:** toys with movable parts, candy
- » **other:** cedar and other soft wood shavings (hamsters and gerbils)

If you think your pet has been poisoned, contact your vet immediately. In addition to vomiting and diarrhea, signs of poisoning can include listlessness, abdominal pain, muscle tremors, lack of coordination, and fever. **The ASPCA has a 24-hour call-in poison control center, contact them at (888) 426-4435.**



“AT FIRST I WAS EMBARRASSED. ME, A CAT, LIVING WITH A SINGLE GUY. BUT WHEN I WATCH HIM PICK SOMETHING UP WITH HIS HANDS AND EAT IT, I CAN'T HELP BUT LOVE HIM.”

—MARU adopted 01-10-10



A PERSON IS THE BEST THING TO HAPPEN TO A SHELTER PET

### QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PETCARE TV WALLBOARD PROGRAM?

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