

# What you need to know about your puppy



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# Do you know the five key things your puppy needs to lead a healthy and happy life?

They're called the five welfare needs and the law requires you to provide these for all your pets.

These five welfare needs are:



## Environment

Give them a safe, suitable place to live



## Diet

Feed them the right food for their age, health and lifestyle



## Behaviour

Allow them to show normal behaviour patterns



## Companionship

Dogs are social animals and need plenty of company from people and other friendly dogs



## Health

Keep your pet in good health and seek vet advice if they're ill or injured



*This booklet's full of advice and top tips to help you keep your new puppy healthy and happy*



## ENVIRONMENT

There are a few simple ways you can keep your puppy healthy, happy and comfortable both at home and when out and about.



### A comfortable dog bed

A cosy bed is important for puppies. This should be kept in a quiet, dry, draught-free area. Make sure you choose one that can be cleaned easily and thoroughly, and do this regularly.

### Car travel

It's important to keep your puppy safe when travelling; secure them behind a dog guard or on the back seat with a seat belt. Gradually getting them used to the car at a young age will make future journeys less stressful for you and them.

- Let them explore inside your parked car in their own time, under supervision in a safe area
- Leave the doors open so they can come and go as they please and reward them with praise when they're relaxed

- Gradually build up from this: first, get them used to the seat belt.
- Next time, turn the engine on to help them get used to the noise.
- When they're relaxed being in the car with the engine on, go for a short drive
- If they get anxious during any of these stages, calmly end what you're doing and go back to the previous step.

### Poisons and hazards around the garden and home

Keep your dog safe from hidden dangers in your home by checking out our poisons page [pdsa.org.uk/poisonsandhazards](https://pdsa.org.uk/poisonsandhazards)

From chocolate and grapes to onions and medicines meant for humans, it's a comprehensive list of poisons and hazards to keep safely out of reach of paws. Thousands of accidents and illnesses are caused by them every year, so by doing some simple safety checks you can help to keep your puppy safe.

### CHECKLIST

- ✓ Safe from any hazards or poisons
- ✓ Restrained safely when out and about in the car
- ✓ Own comfortable bed in a quiet area



## DIET

### **Do dogs of different ages need different food?**

Yes, dogs of different ages have different nutritional requirements. So one of the best ways of ensuring your dog has the right nutrients is to feed it by its 'life stage'. This means feeding a different diet when it's a puppy, adult or senior dog. For example, puppies need more calories since they've so much growing to do.

Puppies are usually ready to eat solid food when they're about five weeks old.

**Speak to your vet about the best time to move your puppy on to an adult diet – this can vary with the breed.**

### CHECKLIST

- ✓ Ask your vet for advice on the best time to change your puppy to an adult diet
- ✓ Feed a complete, commercial puppy food
- ✓ Cut out the treats

### **How often should you feed your puppy?**

Initially, puppies should have four meals a day. This can be reduced to three a day by about twelve weeks of age. After six months, this can be reduced to being fed once or twice daily.

### **Change one thing today**

*Puppies don't need lots of treats to know you love them.*

*Keep treats for training purposes and spend time playing with toys and giving your puppy your attention instead.*





## BEHAVIOUR



### Do you need to train your puppy?

Yes. Training is a great way to keep your puppy's mind active. It also helps you bond and understand each other, especially when you're out together. Without training, the world can be a pretty confusing place for your puppy.

It's easier to learn when it's fun. The kindest and most effective method is called '**reward-based training**' – also called '**positive reinforcement**' – check out our website for more information: [pdsa.org.uk/dogbehaviour](http://pdsa.org.uk/dogbehaviour)



### Toys

A mentally stimulated puppy is more likely to be a happy puppy. Play with your puppy regularly, using appropriate toys – ensure that the toys are large and sturdy enough to withstand chewing and cannot be swallowed or cause an obstruction. Keep some stored away; use different toys in different weeks. This helps to keep the toys interesting for your puppy – and also gives you a chance to clean them.



### Exercise

Once fully vaccinated, you can take your puppy out for walks at their own pace on the lead. You can begin taking your puppy for longer walks from six months of age, gradually increasing the length of walks.

As well as walks, other exercise for puppies includes running and playing in the garden or in a park. You should allow your puppy to rest as soon as they've had enough as they can overdo it.



### **Socialisation**

Socialisation is one of the most important things you can do for your puppy as it helps them become friendly, confident and outgoing adults. It's all about letting them gradually meet people and other animals, and experience lots of everyday sights and sounds, especially in the first few weeks of life.

Puppies need to be socialised when they're young because of the way their brains develop. Between three and eight weeks of age, a puppy wants to explore everything that's new. But, after about eight weeks, their brain changes. They're more likely to be nervous of new things and back away.

### **So what should you do to help their behaviour before eight weeks of age?**

Gradually get them meeting people and animals, exploring different places and enjoying new experiences. Start gently and build up e.g. visit a small row of shops before a shopping centre. The earlier you start socialisation, the better. It starts the moment they're born. You should get a puppy from a place where it has been amongst everyday sights and sounds, like the vacuum cleaner, TV, sound system and washing machine.

### **Is socialisation important after eight weeks of age?**

Yes. Their brains are still developing, but they'll be naturally wary of new people and situations. So the way you handle their encounters is very important to make sure they stay relaxed and unafraid.

For more socialisation tips, download our puppy socialisation leaflet: [pdsa.org.uk/leaflets](http://pdsa.org.uk/leaflets)







## COMPANIONSHIP



Dogs need plenty of company and it's important that adult dogs aren't routinely left on their own for more than four hours a day. If you have to leave them for more than four hours, think about asking a trusted friend, relative or local pet carer to visit.

If you're going on holiday and your puppy can't join you, make sure your puppy is properly looked after by booking them into kennels, or a friend or professional 'pet-sitter' could look after them. Well-run kennels won't allow dogs to board if they haven't been vaccinated, so ensure you check your puppy's vaccinations are up to date well in advance.

If you do go away, it's a good idea to leave a list of information, such as how much food and exercise your puppy needs and your vet's contact details in case of emergencies.

### **Change one thing today**

*Spend one-to-one quality time with your puppy. Plan out your quality time with them – you may take them for a nice walk, play games, groom them, or just have some cuddles. Whatever it is – you can bet your puppy will love it.*



### **CHECKLIST**

- ✓ Spend plenty of quality time with your puppy
- ✓ Ensure your puppy gets the care and attention it needs if you go away
- ✓ Never leave your puppy home alone if you go away.



## Vaccination

Vaccinations protect your puppy and give you peace of mind. They protect against diseases that can cause pain, distress and are often fatal. They also prevent diseases from being passed onto other animals.

### Which diseases do vaccines protect against?

- Canine distemper ('hard pad')
- Canine parvovirus
- Infectious canine hepatitis
- Kennel cough
- Leptospirosis
- Parainfluenza

### When's the best time to vaccinate?

Your puppy should receive a primary vaccination course early in life, followed by 'booster' vaccinations throughout its life.

The primary vaccination course for puppies varies with the type of vaccine used. The first vaccine can sometimes be given as young as six weeks of age, with the second usually given two to four weeks later. **Your vet will advise you how long you have to wait before your puppy can mix with other animals.**

Booster vaccinations are needed as the body's immune response gradually fades over time. They're often given every year, depending on the vaccine.

### Ask your vet when it's best to vaccinate your puppy.







## Neutering

Neutering is an operation carried out by a vet. In male animals, the testicles are removed – this is called ‘castration’. In female animals, the ovaries and the uterus (womb) are removed – this is called ‘spaying’.

### Why do it?

There are hundreds of thousands of unwanted animals in need of homes. Neutering stops animals from adding to this problem by preventing unwanted litters.

Neutering can help your dog to live longer and enjoy a better quality of life. It also reduces the risk of pets developing some serious illnesses. In female dogs it reduces the risk of breast cancer and prevents a potentially life-threatening condition called pyometra (a serious infection of the womb). In male dogs neutering protects from testicular cancer and disease of the prostate gland.

### When?

For male and female dogs, neutering is often carried out under one year of age for the maximum benefit. **Ask your vet when the best time would be for your dog.**

### Will neutering cause my dog to gain weight?

Many people believe that neutering causes weight gain. Neutered dogs can be more prone to gaining weight, but providing your dog with the right diet and exercise will make sure your dog maintains a healthy weight.





### How do I know if my puppy's got fleas, ticks or worms?

Signs include:

- Fur loss
- Inflamed (reddened) skin
- Scratching, biting or licking more than normal
- Pot-bellied appearance
- Vomiting and diarrhoea

### My puppy's showing some of these signs, what should I do?

- Take your puppy to see your vet.
- If your puppy has fleas, it's important to treat your home, your dog and all your other pets. **Your vet can recommend safe and effective products to use.**

Puppies should be regularly treated for fleas and worms. Preventive parasite treatments include sprays, tablets, injections and 'spot-on' preparations. Treatments available 'over the counter' (for example, from pet shops and supermarkets) may not be as effective as those available from your vets – so bear this in mind if you want your pet to be properly protected.





### Microchipping

Many pets go missing every year and, sadly, many are never reunited with their owners. But there's a simple solution. Identifying your dog with a microchip gives a greater chance of being reunited with your dog should they get lost, and must be used together with a collar and identity tag. Microchipping will become a legal requirement across the UK in April 2016, so get your dog microchipped now.

A microchip is a harmless radio chip about the size of a grain of rice and is injected under the skin of your puppy in the same way as a routine vaccination.



### Speak to your vet or vet nurse for further advice on getting your dog microchipped

and make sure you update your details on the microchipping database if you move house.

### Dental care

Looking after your dog's teeth is just as important as looking after our own. Regular tooth brushing using pet toothpaste is the best way to keep the teeth clean and healthy. There are also specially designed foods, chews and toys available to help clean your dog's teeth.

For a demonstration on how to brush your dog's teeth, visit [pdsa.org.uk/pethealthvideos](http://pdsa.org.uk/pethealthvideos)

### CHECKLIST

- ✓ Ensure your puppy is registered with a vet
- ✓ Ask your vet about neutering and make sure your puppy's vaccinations are up to date
- ✓ Check your puppy's flea and worm treatments are up to date – seek advice from your vet about suitable, safe treatments
- ✓ Look into pet insurance – injury and illness can mean unexpected vet bills.



For more information on the five animal welfare needs or further advice on looking after your puppy, visit: [pdsa.org.uk/puppy](http://pdsa.org.uk/puppy)

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