

Maintaining Health and Well-being

A young girl with brown hair in a ponytail, wearing a yellow button-down shirt over a white t-shirt and blue patterned pants, is sitting on a yellow patterned surface. She is smiling and grooming a white puppy with a wooden comb. The puppy is sitting next to her, looking towards the camera with its mouth slightly open.

*Your puppy arrived in good health. You feed it properly, have it vaccinated, wormed and treated for parasites according to plan: fine...
...but you will probably want to lavish extra care and attention over and above these basic necessities.*

As you are now responsible for the day to day health and well being of your new charge, you can show all your love, in various little ways of daily care and comfort.

Extra Special Care!

The Grooming Routine

- If you have a long or medium-haired dog, daily brushing is required (e.g. Yorkshire Terrier, Collie or Golden Retriever), twice weekly brushing for woolly or tough fur (e.g. poodle or fox terrier), and once a month for short-haired dogs (e.g. dachshund or boxer). Talk to your dog during grooming, and finish up with a reward.

The Pedicure

- If your dog spends more time walking on carpet than on hard floors, teach it to give you its paw to have its claws cut. Your vet can advise you as to the right tool, and how far to go!

The Facial

- When you find mucus in the corner of your dog's eyes, or even a slight watering, remove it with a clean compress soaked in warm water. Gently wipe the mucus, in a downward direction, away from the eye. In case of blood-shot eyes or persistent watering, consult your vet without delay.

The Ear Canal

- So long as your dog's ears are clean and odourless, leave them well alone. Some dogs have too many hairs in their ears, and gentle removal is required (this may be done by your dog's groomer, your vet, or yourself: they can show you how). Sometimes puppies can have black or dark brown earwax, causing them to shake and scratch their head.





Your vet may supply a special ear cleaner to help remove this.

The Bath

● Generally speaking, you need warm water and a mild pet shampoo. First wash and rinse your dog thoroughly, then dry your dog completely (towels and hair-dryer). Some dogs do not need washing more than once a year.



N.B. Shampoos for humans are a little different to those carefully developed for dogs.

Your vet will advise as to the special products required in the case of specific skin problems, such as greasy skin or allergies.

The Dental

● Tartar, a build up of mineral salts contained in the saliva, all too quickly forms dental plaque on the teeth, especially in certain small breeds.

Use a soft tooth-brush or special finger-brush with a dog's toothpaste to clean the teeth. No joke! It's the one way to ensure healthy adult teeth that will last, with sweeter breath and better overall health into the bargain. When tartar is allowed to build up teeth are at risk of decaying and gum disease can cause them to come loose too. De-scaling by ultrasound under anaesthetic is the best solution, a procedure carried out by veterinary surgeons.



Suspicious of Illness?

One morning, your dog stays in bed, looks miserable and doesn't give you the usual greeting...

Muzzle: warm or cold?

● This is irrelevant, unless it is abnormally dry, cracked or oozing. Your dog may have a 40°C fever and a cool muzzle, or vice-versa. The only thing that really counts is the dog's internal temperature.

Temperature: what exactly?

● Illness is often accompanied by fever (temperature above 39°C,

rapid breathing, heart rate, and lethargy). The normal average temperature is 38.5°C, ranging between 38°C and 39°C. If you suspect your dog has a temperature you should contact your vet.

Not eating: need to worry?

● *Your dog is uninterested in food...* but playful, lively and alert? Then remove the food. Do not try tempting the appetite with something different. Serve your dog's regular food at the next meal time. If it is eaten, that's fine. If not, then maybe phone the vet for guidance, especially if your dog is usually a good eater.



Vomiting: what?

● **Grass** – Can be normal, up to a point.

A little bile – No need to worry unless the dog seems unwell or it goes on more than once or twice.

The previous day's meal - Careful! Otherwise still fit and well? If the next meal is eaten at the usual time and nothing else happens, it's probably not serious, otherwise consult your vet.

Vomiting and "off colour" - Consult your vet straight away: it could be the beginnings of gastro-enteritis or of some other problem. Best treat immediately.

Diarrhoea?

● With correct feeding, worming and vaccination this may not be too serious. If your dog is otherwise behaving normally, a period without food but **access to plenty of fresh tap water** may solve the problem. If your dog is unwell in any other way, showing signs of lethargy or there is blood with the diarrhoea, it is important to consult your vet as there are many different possible causes. For adult dogs 24 hours without food, resuming feeding gradually over

the following 24 hours often resolves the problem. For young puppies, 24 hours of starvation is often too long so it is advisable to consult your vet first.

Coughing?

● Kennel cough is highly contagious and the most common cause of coughing in dogs. Your dog may not have been vaccinated against the bacterial part of this disease, *Bordetella bronchiseptica*. If your puppy is coughing consult your vet to get an accurate diagnosis of the cause. If your dog is suspected of having kennel cough prompt treatment is important, but your vet may ask you to wait outside, to prevent spreading the infection to other dogs in the waiting room.

Lethargy

● If your dog is sleeping more than usual, something may be wrong. It is a good idea to have your dog checked out by your vet.



Increased drinking, and urinating

● *With modern dry 'biscuit' diets (20% water content), your dog needs to drink more than when on a 'tinned' diet (80% water content).*

In hot weather and with exercise, water requirements go up. Never deprive your dog of water, but monitor how much it is drinking each day and let your vet know if it is excessive.

When should you consult your veterinarian?

● *Consult your vet whenever there is some change in your puppy's appetite or behaviour. Illness can take hold very quickly. Your puppy will not necessarily be better tomorrow. It may be too late; all things taken into consideration, it is better to be safe than sorry. All adult dogs should visit the vet annually for booster vaccinations. When your dog starts showing signs of ageing (6 years of age for large breeds) it may be advisable to have a check up every six months. There are a number of tests that can be carried out depending on the clinical findings, such as blood tests, X-rays, ECG or ultrasound. These may help to limit diseases associated with ageing.*