



## Poor Appetite



A poor appetite means something is wrong. If it persists, it could be something serious. It may not be due to a physical problem but to stress.

Some pets are more anxious than others are, and don't adapt well to changes. That could include family members leaving or moving in, adopting a new pet, or just changes in the type of food or food dish or where you put the bowl. If stress may be a factor, try to make your pet's life as stable as possible and try supplements to reduce anxiety.

### Checkup

Your pet needs to have an exam and testing to see if there is an underlying disease causing the reduced appetite. Kidney or liver problems or cancer will often make a pet not interested in eating. Pain due to arthritis or dental disease may be the cause. Addressing health concerns will help to make your pet feel better and eat better.

### What to Do

After addressing or while treating health issues, some pets still don't eat well. Elderly pets may not smell as well and warming up their food may make it more palatable. Wet food may be more desirable than dry food and some pets like the ones with gravy.

Sometimes a brand new food will entice your pet to eat. Adding some highly desirable human food, such as tuna, cheese, or cooked meat, may work. Some pets will eat meat baby food. A prescription diet called a/d is very palatable for many pets.

If your pet has nausea, chilling the food may reduce the odor and your pet may be more inclined to eat it. Medications to stimulate the appetite are available to help your pet. Feeding small multiple meals a day often will be more effective than one or two meals.

### Caution

Pets that don't eat, especially cats and small dogs, can become dehydrated because they often don't drink as well either. Dehydration complicates everything so it's important to have your pet examined soon once you notice there's a problem. Some cats can also develop a liver problem if they stop eating.

Another note of caution: Cats WILL NOT eat when "they get hungry enough." They will actually starve themselves rather than eat something they don't want. Most dogs will eventually eat if they are not dealing with an underlying health problem, though they may wait it out for a few days.

