



Sharing Your Home With a Dog

What You Need to Know

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Compliments of



Find what you need

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Congratulations on getting a dog! The amount of information you need to know may seem overwhelming, but don't worry! You'll get the hang of it. The benefit is a healthy dog to share your life.

Let's get started!

THE BASICS

Supplies

Starting with the right supplies will help turn your home into a dog home. Every dog needs these:

- Food and water bowls (metal or ceramic)
- Food
- Collar or harness, leash, and ID tag
- Toys
- Bed and Kennel
- Grooming supplies and nail trimmers
- Seat belt
- Poop bags



The list of available dog products seems to go on forever. Find what your dog likes best and go from there. Covers are available to protect your furniture. Baby gates work well to keep areas dog free (especially where you keep the cat's litter boxes). You can also buy gates made for dogs in a variety of options.



You should also have a [pet first aid kit](#). Knowing what to do in emergencies is a great idea so you don't panic if the unfortunate happens to your dog.

After reading this book, read other articles we have on [dogs](#). **The more you learn, the easier it will be to make all the right decisions for your new best friend.**

Feeding

A high quality food is important. Generally, the more expensive the food, the better the quality as they use ingredients that are easily digested by your dog. This means your dog gets more nutrition from it. In lower quality food, more of the food is passed out in the stool, as the food isn't digested as well. Your dog will need to eat more of that food as well so it may not be as inexpensive as you thought.



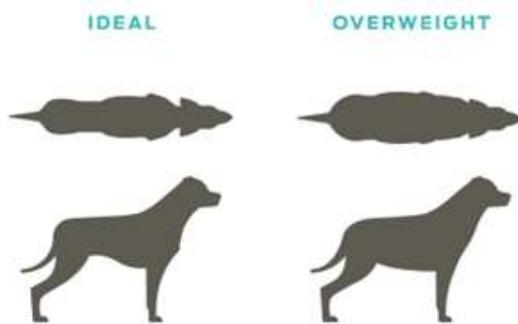
Stainless steel bowls or ceramic bowls are easy to clean and help avoid skin issues.

Avoid artificial preservatives, as there are better ways to preserve food. Colorful foods look that way because of artificial dyes and do nothing to improve the quality of the food. Learn how to read [pet food labels](#) to find a good food. We can also advise you on what to feed.

Many people prefer to feed dry food for ease. Older dogs or dogs with urinary disease may need canned food as the sole diet or in addition to their dry food.

Some medical conditions require prescription diets. Dogs that are prone to dental disease will often benefit from a prescription food designed to reduce tarter.

Most dogs do best when fed meals twice daily. Some dogs can be free fed (meaning a bowl of food can be left out at all times). If your dog inhales his food, he's probably not a good candidate for free feeding. Dogs that finish their daily ration of food by early afternoon are also dogs that need to be fed meals. Unless you are lucky, it's difficult to free feed multiple dogs. There's usually at least one that takes more than his fair share!



Body condition can be hard to determine, especially if your dog is fluffy. Ask us if you aren't sure.

To determine how much to feed, **monitor how your dog looks.** A dog that is at a healthy weight should have a waist when viewed from above and the abdomen should tuck up when viewed from the side. An overweight dog will lose his waist and slim appearance. One that is too skinny will have visible ribs and hips.

The general rule of thumb for feeding is 1 cup of dry food per 25 pounds of dog per day. This is for a high quality very digestible food.

You will need to feed more of a lesser quality food.

Another option is to start with the amount recommended on the bag. Simply adjust the amount as needed. If your dog loses weight, feed a little more. If your dog gains weight, decrease what you are feeding. Every dog is different. Weighing monthly will help you keep track.



Puzzle bowls will help slow down your dog as he eats. He can't gulp down as much food when barriers are in the way!

Some dogs wolf their food down and, in the process, swallow a lot of air. This could lead to problems. Slow down your dog's eating by placing large rocks in the food dish, or getting a special dish designed to slow him down.

Water

Your dog should have water available at all times. If your dog drinks too quickly or slops water around, do the things described above to slow him down. Use a boot mat under the bowl to catch excess water.

Potty Time

Most people prefer their dogs go outside to urinate and defecate. [Housetraining](#) is one of the most important things you will do with a new dog. A well-trained puppy or dog is a blessing!

The basic rule is never take your eyes off your dog until he is perfect. Tie a leash to your belt to keep him next to you when you aren't watching him. It is too easy for the puppy or dog to wander to another part of the house to do his business while you are busy. Your job will be easier when you learn your dog's signals for when he needs to go out. It is a lot of work in the beginning, but is well worth the effort. Unfortunately, some dogs are never truly housetrained. They don't mess in the house because their owners let them go outside often enough. The dogs have not truly learned they only do their business outside. Problems happen when routines change, and you can't keep the schedule as you used to.



Keeping your dog close allows you to watch him while learning his signals.

Restrain your dog when outside for his safety. Use a leash, a tie-out cable, an invisible fence, or a fenced in yard. Never leave your dog unsupervised outdoors.

Pick up stool daily to avoid the spread of disease. Use a commercial dog scoop or a plastic bag. Simply turn the bag inside out, place it over your hand, and pick up the poop. Turn the bag right side out over the poop. Tie the bag up and throw away.

For accidents in the house, use an enzyme cleaner that is safe for your floor. Wear gloves when cleaning up accidents. If needed, go back to housetraining to retrain your dog.



Disposable pads are easy but there are other options.

You can also train your dog to defecate and urinate inside. Supply a quiet area with puppy pads (absorbent material with waterproof bottom) or use a dog litter box. You may confuse your dog if you try to train him to go both outside (usually when the weather is nice) and indoors (when the weather isn't). You will need to decide which place you want your dog to use and be consistent.

Kennels

Every dog needs a kennel (crate) to call his own. Kennels are the only way you can confine your dog sufficiently when housetraining. Kennels should be just large enough for the dog to stand up in and turn around. Otherwise, the dog can make a mess in one end of the kennel and sleep in the other. Dogs usually don't want to sleep in their bathroom!



For growing puppies, use a crate with a divider.

Kennels are also great during the teething stage and for dogs that chew on everything. This keeps your house undamaged and your dog safe.

Most dogs will learn that their kennel is a safe place and will go there to sleep. Use enticing toys with special treats to make it a happy, desirable place to be. KONG toys with peanut butter works great!

Collars vs Harnesses

There are many collars available. If your dog has a small head or thick neck, think about using a martingale collar that tightens when pulled (it has a stopping point to avoid choking). Some dogs such as pugs and other dogs with little to no visible neck do better with harnesses. A dog with a tracheal or throat condition should wear a harness.



Layla's martingale type collar will tighten to prevent slipping if needed but hangs loose without pressure.

Place an ID tag with your contact information plus the current rabies tag on your dog's collar (or harness). You can even get some collars that have the information directly on the collar itself.

Walks

Your dog will need routine walks, even if you have a fenced in yard. Walks help to socialize your dog and to enrich his life. For many solo dogs, it's often necessary for getting enough exercise. Many dogs don't run around in a fenced yard by themselves. They want someone to run (or walk) with.



Some dogs have no problem walking on a leash. Others are too scared, while others may pull you down. When using a leash and collar, make sure your dog cannot back out of it.

We don't advise the flexi retractable leashes. The leash can cause burns on the skin of both humans and pets. Also, it's too easy for your dog to run to the end of it and then be pulled back suddenly. This can cause injuries. When encountering people and other dogs, it's important to have a short leash, and it's often difficult to pull your dog back quickly with a flexi lead.



Zuko's head halter prevents him from pulling.

For dogs that are scared and back away, consider a harness. For dogs that pull, consider a head halter or anti-pulling harness. There are many options available today to prevent your dog from pulling. They are worth looking into for any dog that won't walk well on a leash.

It's important to train your dog to walk on a leash and to behave himself.

You don't want your dog lunging at another dog or jumping up on people while out for a walk. It's important for your safety as well, especially on stairs. Use treats on your walk as a positive reward and as a distraction as needed. Giving treats (and doing commands) while walking by something provoking (another dog, a cat, garbage on the ground, etc.) can help your dog focus on you and the walk.

Nail Care

[Trim nails](#) often to keep them short (every 2-4 weeks). Usually, the nails will click on the hard floor when they are too long. If you wait too long between nail trims, the quicks (the pink area that has blood flow and is painful when cut) will get long and make it difficult to cut the nail short.

Most dogs don't like to have their nails trimmed so you need to train them to accept it calmly. This will take a while for some dogs but is important if you want to trim your dog's nails at home. Go slow and offer lots of treats. These treats should be special (highly desirable and not given at any other time) and timed properly. Give the treat at the exact moment you want your dog to remember in a positive way (aka, when you touch the feet, when you actually clip the nail, etc.). If needed, we can trim the nails.



Take a little off at a time to avoid hitting the quick.

Some dogs become so anxious about nail trims that we need to give medicine to calm them for the process. We usually give two medicines. One will calm the body while the other calms the mind. This way he can learn that it's ok.

Coat Care/Baths



Some dogs, like Joe the Malamute, require a lot of brushing.

How often your dog needs brushed and groomed depends on your dog's coat. Long-haired dogs need brushing daily. Dogs with undercoats need extensive brushing to remove the undercoat (that forms clumps). Poodles and other dogs with continually growing coats need routine grooming to trim the hair.

How often a dog needs bathed also varies. Most dogs won't need a bath more than once a month.

However, dogs with skin issues may need bathing once a week or more with a specialized shampoo. You can usually [bathe dogs at home](#). Use food as a reward during baths. Smear peanut butter on the bath wall as a distraction during the bath.

Toys

[Dogs need toys](#) and chew things to stay healthy. Toys help deal with boredom, especially if your dog is alone. Find out the types of toys your dog likes best. Be sure to examine the toys regularly and discard any that have been ripped or have pieces coming off. Avoid bones, ice cubes, antlers, and hard plastic toys as they can break teeth.



Seat Belt



There are a variety of seatbelt options. Find what works best for your dog.

There are dog seat belts available to help restrain your dog in the event of sudden braking or a car crash. Research the ones available to find out which ones work best for dogs. **It's always best to have your dog restrained in the car.** It not only protects the dog, it also protects humans from being hit by a dog that flies through the air during a crash. They will also prevent your dog from running away after an accident.

PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE

Vet Visits

Your dog should see us for a checkup at least once a year. Older dogs (8+ years for most dogs) need an exam at least twice a year. Your dog should also be seen any time you suspect an illness, you find a lump, or if your dog behaves differently.

Sometimes it's difficult to know your dog is sick. He can't tell you how he's feeling, and he may still be eating enough and acting well enough to look normal. Some diseases don't show many signs in the early stages. That's why an exam is so important.



Dr. Colgan examining Kane, the Great Dane.

Frequent vet visits keep your dog healthy and allow us to find diseases early. The earlier we identify diseases, the easier (and often cheaper) they are to treat. **This is the best investment you can make.** Your dog will usually live longer and better.

Vaccines

Although we try to minimize [vaccinations](#), **all dogs need some to protect them from deadly diseases.** A distemper/parvo combo includes protection against several diseases including distemper, parvovirus, a type of hepatitis, and some respiratory infections.



Lepto is commonly spread in contaminated water. Heavy rain and flooding can put your dog at increased risk.

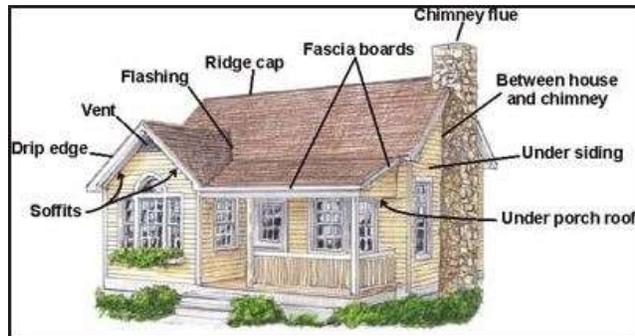
Most dogs should have a Lepto vaccine that protects against leptospirosis. This disease causes kidney and liver problems. It can also infect humans. By vaccinating your dog for it, you help to protect your family.

The flu vaccine is a good idea for most dogs. It's not usually a fatal disease, but unfortunately it can be. It is highly contagious, though, so your dog can readily get it if the flu is in the area. Your dog must finish the vaccinations before he is protected so you need to get it ahead of time. If you wait to see if the flu comes, it may be too late to protect your dog.

Certain vaccines are recommended for dogs that will be in social settings such as dog parks, doggy daycare, boarding, and grooming facilities. Some places require vaccines such as Bordetella, a vaccine that protects against one cause of the highly contagious kennel cough.

All dogs need rabies vaccinations even if they only go outdoors to potty. Bats are the primary carrier of rabies in our area, and bats will get into our homes more readily than you imagine!

If your dog is exposed to a bat and not vaccinated, you will be advised to have the dog euthanized. It's an agonizing ordeal. Even if you don't really want to vaccinate your dog for rabies, we advise you do it just because of the legal hassles if you don't. It will also protect your dog "just in case" a bat does get into your house.



This picture shows the many ways a bat could get into your house.

Fleas

The bad news is that we will never eradicate [fleas](#)! They are incredibly good at survival. The good news is that we have much better flea medicine than before.

To avoid fleas, use a trusted flea medicine year round. Flea products carried by



Fleas are small but visible. If you don't see the flea, you might see evidence of fleas which look like salt and pepper.

veterinarians are generally newer and more effective. We advise you avoid products by Hartz®. Pets treated with their products seem to have more problems than with other companies.

When you have fleas, you need to treat all pets in the household for at least 3 months. One treatment will not fix the problem because of the immature stages of the flea that are in your house.

Fleas can get indoors. **Treat all dogs, even if they rarely go outside.** It is much easier to prevent the problem than to clear out an infestation in your home. Fleas multiply rapidly, so it doesn't take long before their numbers are overwhelming.

Heartworms

Mosquitoes bite your dog and give him [heartworms](#). The worms travel through the lungs and settle in the heart. **They cause severe heart damage leading to heart failure.** Treatment is expensive and dangerous. Even after you successfully eradicate the worms, your dog can be left with the damage they have done. The heart failure that can ensue is then a life-long condition.



Finn's heart contained many heartworms that caused irreversible damage to his heart leading to his death.

Prevention is very important! Keep all dogs on heartworm medicine year round. Even if your dog stays mostly indoors, he is still at risk. Mosquitoes come into our homes. The medicine comes in several forms so choose what works best for you and your dog.

Before starting heartworm prevention and every 12 months, your dog needs a heartworm test to make sure your dog doesn't have the parasite. This is a simple blood test run during your routine vet visit. It allows early diagnosis before the worm causes too much damage. It also ensures the preventive medicine doesn't cause any problems if your dog is positive for heartworm.

Intestinal Parasites

Most dogs get [intestinal parasites](#) from eating contaminated feces or by eating prey. Puppies are born with roundworms. **Parasites will have an effect on your dog's health.** The parasites steal your dog's nutrients, may cause diarrhea (with or without blood), and may feed on blood and cause anemia. Some can even infect humans. At least once a year have a stool sample checked for microscopic eggs. Having a stool sample checked is cheap insurance to keep your dog (and your family) healthy.

Your dog can get many parasites. The common intestinal ones include tapeworms, roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, giardia, and coccidia.

Tapeworms are often diagnosed by you finding the parasite on your pet. They look like small pieces of rice near the rear end or in the stool. They are a result of fleas or eating prey such as rabbits. Treatment is simple with a single dose of tapeworm medicine. All dogs with fleas should be treated for tapeworms since examining a stool sample doesn't usually show it.



Tapeworms look like rice on the fur or in the poop.

Adult dogs get roundworms from eating prey or contaminated stool (they step in stool and then lick their paws). Roundworms are large worms and can cause an obstruction in the intestines. They can also cause vomiting and unthriftiness. Puppies are born with roundworms that come from their mother. Because of this, we treat all puppies for roundworms. **Roundworms can cause serious disease in humans so treatment is imperative.** Make sure to always wash hands after handling puppies or any feces.



Hookworms can cause a “rash” in people.

Hookworms are also common. Dogs become infected by either the larvae (immature forms) penetrating the skin or by eating the eggs or larvae in the environment. Puppies can get them from their mothers. Hookworms can be serious in high numbers because they suck on blood causing anemia. **Hookworms can also infect humans.** When humans are affected, it is usually a skin rash caused by the larvae migrating under the skin. The medicine used to treat roundworms also treats hookworms. Some medicines that prevent heartworms will also control roundworms and hookworms.

Whipworms can cause diarrhea, often with mucus or blood. It can be intermittent and become chronic. Eggs pass in the stool but in low numbers. This makes it difficult to find them when the stool is examined. Because of this, we often treat dogs with diarrhea for them “just in case”. The worm has a long life cycle so we repeat the worm medicine every month for 3 months. This worm does not infect cats or humans.

Giardia and coccidia are not worms, but protozoa, something like amoebas. They can cause diarrhea but do not infect humans (humans have their own versions). Dogs are exposed through eggs in the environment.



Picking up poop immediately can help prevent parasites.

After treating your dog for parasites, have a stool sample examined to make sure they are gone. Then have one checked at least once a year.

Dental Care

Dogs need daily [dental care](#), just like people. **Keeping your dog's mouth free from disease is one of the most important things you can do to help your dog live longer and have a happier life.** Research has shown that dogs live about 2 years longer if they receive regular dental treatments from their vet.

Dental disease is often painful. Unfortunately, it is often difficult for you to notice your dog is in pain. They chew on just one side of their mouth so they continue to eat. That's why regular checkups and teeth cleanings are so important.



Odie has his teeth brushed but still needs routine professional cleanings.

You can brush your dog's teeth every day or use other dental products to keep the teeth clean. Dental products include Hill's® Prescription Diet® t/d® Canine food (it's proven to help decrease tarter), Maxiguard® Oral Cleansing Gel (applied to the gum line), and approved dental chews. VOHC is the Veterinary Oral Health Committee. Look for their seal of approval for dental products that work.

For products to be effective, you need to use them **every day** and as often or as much as the package indicates. Even when you do this, or brush your dog's teeth every day, your dog will still need a professional cleaning. However, all the home care you do keeps the teeth healthier longer so you won't need the professional cleanings as often. In addition, there will be fewer teeth needing additional work done. That will save you money.

With a professional cleaning, anesthesia is needed so that the entire mouth can be examined, teeth x-rayed, and teeth extracted if needed. This may seem excessive, especially if your dog needs it often, yet **it is vitally important. Regular cleaning stops dental problems from progressing.** It's easier (and cheaper) to treat problems early, rather than waiting years when the only solution is to extract many teeth.



Full mouth x-rays are important to identify hidden problems during a dental cleaning.

Anal Glands

Anal glands are scent glands located near the anus. Most dogs express these on their own when they have a bowel movement. However, some dogs can't express them, and the material builds up in them. These dogs need their glands manually expressed on a regular basis. If not done, they will often become painful and infected.

Signs of full anal glands include licking the rear end and/or scooting the rear end on the floor. Some groomers will express the glands, though it may not be complete especially if the dog tends to have problems. Those dogs have glands that are difficult to express. **If your dog is prone to infections, it's better to have us do it.** We will fully express each gland and look for signs of infection.

Microchip



A small hand-held scanner is used to check Roxie's microchip number.

A microchip is a small identifying chip, about twice the size of a grain of rice, placed under the skin to help identify lost pets. Dogs tolerate the placement well, and every dog should have a microchip. Too often a dog loses its tags, and people think it's a stray. All strays should be scanned for a chip. **A microchip may be the only way someone can know the dog belongs to you.**

After your dog receives a microchip, contact the company to let them know your contact information. They can then contact you directly if they are ever contacted about a lost dog. Otherwise, the company will give out the information on where the chip was placed (as that is who purchased the microchip). Most shelters microchip dogs before you adopt them. Again, contact the company to give them your contact information. Update this information any time you move or change your phone number.

Spay/Neuter

Female dogs should be [spayed](#), and male dogs should be [neutered](#). This prevents them from producing unwanted puppies. **It also prevents some behavioral and health problems that occur due to the hormones.**

Dogs that have not had the surgery are more likely to wander away and get into fights. They are also more likely to mark their territory by urinating on things, outside and in your house.



Unspayed females will likely develop mammary tumors when they are older. This is like breast cancer in women. They can also get an infection of the uterus that can be life threatening and will require surgery. Unneutered males can get cancer of the testicles and are more prone to some other cancers as well. Spaying and neutering, especially at an early age, will prevent these diseases.

We advise having the surgery done when your puppy is 4-6 months old. If you adopted an adult female dog, she will need to be out of heat for 2 months before surgery. An adult male dog can be neutered at any time.

Supplements

We want your dog to live a long and healthy life. To help achieve that goal, we encourage preventive measures. Besides regular checkups and lab tests, a good quality food and supplements are important. The supplements we advise all promote a healthy immune system. This is important to ward off infections and to slow down diseases, including cancer. Some of the supplements will also support different organs so that they function well.



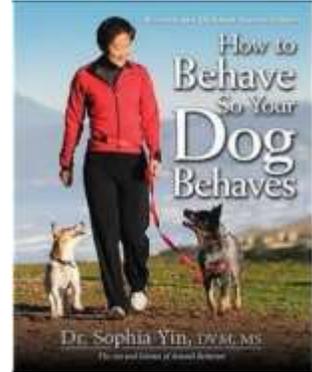
Most dogs will benefit from antioxidants, fish oil, and probiotics to maintain good health. Other supplements or herbs will help specific conditions. The more we can support the heart, kidneys, and liver, the less work these organs need to do and will result in a healthier dog.

BEHAVIOR

Training

Every dog needs proper [training](#) for the safety of you, your dog, and those around you. It takes time and effort, but in the end you have a well-mannered dog (one that doesn't drive you crazy!).

There are many training classes, books, and videos available. We advise following the advice of Dr. Sophia Yin, world-renowned animal behaviorist, who uses positive reinforcement training (treats for good behavior). Positive training is actually more effective than using punishment. Your dog will want to do as you ask, rather than just avoid punishment.



Body Language

Dogs are amazing at reading human body language. They will react to your body position, tone of voice, and even eye direction. This is one reason why we consider the dog man's best friend. It's also **the reason we can train dogs well.**

It's also important for you to learn dog body language. Your relationship will be much better if you both know what you are saying! You will also be able to notice subtle changes in your dog's behavior more readily.

Behavioral Issues



BoBee is showing subtle signs of being anxious. Notice the whites of her eyes.

Some dogs may have [behavioral issues](#) such as separation anxiety or food aggression. If you notice unwanted behavior in your dog, bring your dog in for a checkup. There may be a physical reason behind it. The next step is to contact a professional dog behaviorist to address the problem before it becomes serious. **A dog with a behavioral issue may become a danger to people and/or other pets.**

Some behavioral problems are due to stress. We have several options for controlling [stress and anxiety](#). The most important thing is to get help as soon as you notice something. These problems don't just go away or get better by themselves. Don't count on a puppy to "outgrow it".

Changes in Behavior

Any time you notice a change in your dog's regular behavior, you should give us a call. You know your pet best! The change can indicate a serious health or behavior problem. Again, the sooner you call the better.

Seniors

We consider most dogs to be seniors at 8+ years old. Extra-large breeds, such as Great Danes, are actually seniors at 5 years of age. As they get older, **senior dogs tend to have special needs.**

Older dogs may become picky about their food. Try a variety of foods on a rotating schedule and try a combination of dry and wet foods. They may eat better if you warm the food up slightly, especially wet food. They may like it better with gravy or something on it.

You need to experiment to find out what works best for your dog. Even then, **it may change in a few days so be patient.**

Older dogs may get crankier or slow down as they age because they are often painful due to arthritis (not just "old age"). If you notice this, have your dog examined. Supplements and pain medicines are available to help comfort your aging dog. Other items that may assist your dog include ramps, rugs/floor grips, and thick dog beds.



Simple lab work can be done in the clinic.

Senior dogs benefit from having check-ups and lab tests every 6 months. Many things can change in that short period of time, and **we prefer to find things early when we have a better chance of making it better.**



This senior, Navi, is 12 years old.

COMMON HEALTH ISSUES

Urinary Tract Infections

If you notice that your dog is asking to go out more often, has blood in the urine, or is having accidents in the house, your dog may have a urinary tract infection. When you bring your dog in for an exam, bring a urine sample with you. Use a clean, plastic container (such as an old margarine container) to catch the first morning's urination. Refrigerate it until you can get it into the clinic (we need to have it within a few hours).



You may not notice bloody urine until a sample is obtained.

Otherwise, we can collect a urine sample at the clinic. Don't let your dog urinate on the way in!

Other things can cause increased urination so it's important to check your dog and test the urine. When it looks like an infection, **a culture of the urine will tell us the best antibiotic to use.** Be sure to give all the medication even though your dog seems back to normal. At the end, have another urine sample checked to make sure the infection is completely gone.

Dog with diabetes and older dogs are more likely to get infections. Some dogs seem to get them repeatedly. If that is the case, a prescription diet or supplements may help.

If left untreated, a bladder infection can go up into the kidneys. That is a much more serious condition.

Hip Dysplasia

Larger dogs can have a condition called hip dysplasia. The hip joints don't form properly and arthritis develops in them at a young age. Diagnosis is with x-rays. **Early diagnosis is important to prevent destruction of the hip joints.** Keeping the dog on the lean side and supplements will help. Surgery and laser therapy are other available options.

Dogs often have an abnormal gait in the early stages. If your dog "bunny hops" (moves both rear legs together), it can be a sign of hip dysplasia. Have your dog examined if you notice something just being "off".



This dog has hip dysplasia.

Ear Problems

Ear infections are the most common cause of an itchy ear and can be common in dogs, especially those with floppy ears, hairy ears, or those that like to swim. Signs include shaking of the head, itchy ears, smelly ears, and discharge from the ears.



A red ear is usually an indication of a problem.

If you notice any of these signs, bring your dog in for an exam to identify the cause. Dogs can get bacteria, yeast, or both in their ears. We can determine the cause by examining a swab of debris from the ears under the microscope. **Once we know the cause, we can start the correct treatment.**

One of the medications we have is put into the ear in the clinic, and then we recheck the ear in 2 weeks. We will give a second dose if the infection is still there. This means you don't have to treat your dog at home making life easier for both of you! Besides medication, we also offer laser therapy as a way to "jump start" the treatment so your dog feels better faster.

If left untreated, an ear infection can cause a hematoma. This is when the earflap fills with blood because the dog shakes his head hard. The ear swells and is uncomfortable. A minor surgery may be required to repair this, and the ear infection needs to be treated to stop the head shaking.



This ear has a hematoma.

Dogs can get ear mites, but they aren't very common. If you have a cat that has ear mites, your dog may get them from the cat., but even this is uncommon.

Allergies can also cause itchy ears. If there is no infection or mites, we can offer medicine to reduce the itchiness and make your dog more comfortable. Tests for allergies to find what is causing the problem are the next step.

Some dogs have **seborrhea**, a condition where the skin is either too dry or too oily. The inner lining of the ear is affected and usually has a waxy buildup. These dogs need to have their ears cleaned on a regular basis (often every day) to keep it under control. They are also more prone to having ear infections.

If your dog is scratching his ears, have him examined to find out the reason. Most of the time, medicines you buy in a pet store won't help.

Skin Problems

[Skin infections](#) are common in dogs. Bacteria and/or yeast that normally live on the skin cause them. An infection develops when the body is susceptible because of another underlying issue such as allergies or disease. The bacteria and yeast take advantage of a weakened immune system. The infection is rarely the primary problem.

Signs include itching, crusting of the skin, red/irritated skin, and smelly skin. Treatment



This dog's belly has sores caused by a bacterial skin infection.

for the infection is usually straightforward, but long-term management can be difficult based on the underlying cause. Your dog usually needs medication for several weeks even if it starts to look better so it's important to give all of it. It's also important to have your dog rechecked to make sure it's cleared up completely. Otherwise, the infection can come back quickly and may be more difficult to treat.

Illinois is a good place to live if you like [allergies](#)! We seem to have plenty of them here. Our dogs have just as many problems, but they take a different form. While most of the time we suffer from respiratory signs such as stuffy nose and sneezing, **dogs usually have itchy skin and ears.** They can often develop infections along with it. Food allergies in dogs can also show up as itchy skin. We have many options available to keep allergies at bay, but allergies are difficult and frustrating to manage. Testing for allergies will help to discover what the causes are and allow us to treat them more effectively to give your dog long lasting relief.

Other skin conditions can include autoimmune diseases and cancer. Many skin problems look similar to each other. Biopsies (a small sample of tissue) of the skin are often necessary to determine the cause.



Zuko has patches of scabs and hair loss along his back from seborrhea, an autoimmune problem. It also makes him more prone to bacterial skin infections.

Limping

Because dogs can be rough during play and like to run, it's easy for them to injure a leg and start limping. Some of these cases are minor and if you have the dog rest for a few days, things go back to normal.

In other cases, they can tear a ligament or even break a bone. There may be an underlying condition like arthritis causing the lameness or a disease. If the limp is mild, give it a few days to see how your dog does. **If he won't put any weight on it, he is acting painful, or it seems to get worse, bring him in for an exam.** We often advise x-rays to see if there is any damage.

Supplements, pain medication, or laser therapy can be used to help your dog heal and to feel better.



Left rear foot of a dog that was limping.

Lumps

Dogs get all kinds of lumps. They may be benign (not cancerous), and you don't need to do anything about them.



Some lumps pop up quickly like this one.

Often it's hard to tell what it is, though, just by looking at it. We will often advise removing it so we can send it to a lab. The lab can tell us if it is cancer, and, if so, how serious it is. It can also tell us if removing it solved the problem. If it is serious, the sooner we know what it is, the sooner we can do something to help your dog. Also, some lumps (even benign ones) will grow quickly so it's best to remove them when they are small.

If it is cancer, the University of Illinois is available if you want to pursue extensive surgery, radiation, or chemotherapy. A consult with them will give you all of your options. We will use herbs and supplements to treat cancer as we've had good success with them.

Waiting to see what happens is usually not a good choice with lumps. They don't often go away by themselves. Each new lump should be examined by the doctor.

POISONS & OTHER DANGERS

Poisonous Human Food

Ideally, you **should not feed human food** to your dog. However, we know that it doesn't always work that way. You may have a dog that will steal food from anywhere. Here's a list of some [foods that can be poisonous](#) to your dog:

Onions, Garlic, Chives	Avocado	Salt (excessive amounts)
Alcohol	Chocolate	Grapes, Raisins
Yeast Dough	Star Fruit	Macadamia Nuts

Sugar free products sweetened with xylitol are very poisonous to dogs. They include some sugarless gums, human toothpaste, and human vitamins. You can also buy it in bulk to sweeten items. Check labels. If there is xylitol, keep it out of your dog's reach.

For a more complete list, visit the [ASPCA website](#) or the [Pet Poison Helpline](#). If your pet has ingested any of these products, call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control or the Pet Poison Helpline. There's a fee, but they will be able to tell you what you need to do.

Common foods toxic to dogs



Non-food Poisons

Most human pain [medicines](#) are poisonous to dogs. This includes but is not limited to ibuprofen, Aleve®, Tylenol®, and Advil®. Make sure you don't drop a pill and leave it for your dog to find later. Even one pill can be dangerous. Others such as cold medicines, antidepressants, anti-cancer drugs, and diet pills can also be poisonous.

Assume any medicine not prescribed for you dog is going to cause problems!

Homemade play dough is a danger for dogs because of the high salt content. When the kids are done playing, pick up all the little pieces and throw them away! Some homemade Christmas ornaments are also made with a high salt content. Make sure your pet doesn't steal them off the tree.

If you have a rodent problem, do not use rat or mouse poison. Your dog could eat a tainted rodent or may eat the bait itself. **Anything that will poison a mouse will poison your dog.**



Tulip bulbs are toxic to dogs.

Many household and garden plants are toxic to dogs. Double-check anything you have to see if it is safe. If not, either don't have it or make sure your dog can't get it. The ASPCA website has an extensive list of plants and will tell you if they are toxic or not.

Antifreeze is very poisonous to dogs. The problem is that antifreeze has a sweet taste that dogs love. Make sure to check under your car for any antifreeze leaks and clean up any spills. Keep all bottles of antifreeze out of reach.

For a more complete lists visit the [ASPCA website](#) or the [Pet Poison Helpline](#). If your pet has ingested any of these products, call the ASPCA Animal Poison Control or the Pet Poison Helpline. There's a fee, but they will be able to tell you what you need to do. It may just save your pet's life.



Other Dangers



Bitter Apple Spray works well for most dogs.

Dogs, especially puppies, may decide to chew on power cords. Before your dog has a chance to try the cords, use a taste deterrent such as Bitter Apple Spray to discourage chewing.

The garbage is very dangerous for your dog. They can choke on bones, develop pancreatitis (an inflammation of the pancreas that is very serious), or get a foreign body. Keep garbage tightly sealed or, better yet, locked behind a door.

We hope you have enjoyed this book and have learned some things. All of us at Loving Paws Pet Clinic want to help you learn everything possible about dogs. You can make the best decisions if you have the right knowledge.

Loving Paws Pet Clinic

Loving pets is what we do!



Dr. Colgan's dog, Zuko