

Meet Your Dog's Basic Needs

As a dog owner, it's essential to understand and meet your pet's basic needs. Whether you're a novice pet parent or an expert, you'll need to set the stage for your new pup. Your dog's basic needs will consist of nutritious food, water, treats, toys and bedding to make the pup feel right at home.

When you bring a new dog into your home, it's best to make a trip to the vet as soon as possible. Your vet can help you pinpoint the right type and the amount of food and other important things you need to know about caring for your new friend.

Monitor food consumption

More than one-third (34%) of dogs were diagnosed as obese, according to the most recent data from Banfield Pet Hospital, which has more than 1,000 veterinary hospitals in 42 states. That's a 108% increase from 2011 to 2020.

Unfortunately, overweight canines are susceptible to many health risks such as metabolic abnormalities, cardiovascular disease or poor immune systems. While you may want to spoil your pet, avoid spoiling them with food.

Provide sufficient water throughout the day

All dogs need to have clean and fresh water available at all times of the day. Make sure to replenish the water and wash all food and water dishes so they don't hold bacteria.

Regularly groom your dog

Regularly grooming your pet ensures they are clean and pest-free. While some dogs only need a bath every few months, others need regular grooming. If your dog sheds, you'll want to brush it often.

Nail trimming is also a must. Neglecting to trim your dog's nails can cause health problems such as injured tendons and deformed feet.

Maintain Your Dog's Health with Routine Care

Proactively tending to your pet's well-being and health care ensures it lives the very best and healthiest life possible.

If you have [pet insurance](#), you can usually offset the cost of routine care by adding a wellness package to your plan. For example, the average cost of a vet office visit is about \$61, according to a Forbes Advisor analysis of veterinarian costs, while the average cost for a series of vaccinations (bivalent influenza, [bordetella](#), DAPP, leptospirosis, [Lyme disease](#) and rabies) costs about \$202.

Schedule annual check-ups with your vet

One of the best ways to keep your pet healthy is to visit the vet regularly so they can examine your dog for any health concerns.

Look for solutions for flea, tick and heartworm prevention

[Fleas and ticks](#) put you and your pet's health at risk since they can transmit diseases like Lyme disease, plague and Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever.

Heartworms can cause damage to your dog's arteries, heart and lungs.

Talk to your veterinarian about preventative measures, such as topical and oral medications.

Maintain proper vaccinations

Vaccinations help protect your dog's body from invasive diseases. Standard canine vaccines usually include parvovirus, distemper, rabies and canine hepatitis.

If you groom or board your pooch, you may also need a vaccine against *Bordetella bronchiseptica*, which can cause kennel cough. Your vet can help pinpoint the vaccines appropriate for your hound.

Consider spaying or neutering your pet

[Spaying and neutering pets](#) isn't just about population control—it can help protect your canine companion from certain diseases.

For example, spaying your female dog can decrease her chances of uterus infections and breast tumors. Neutering male dogs can protect them from testicular cancer and prostate concerns.

Brush your dog's teeth

While often overlooked, dental care is also essential for maintaining your pet's health. Regularly brushing your pup's teeth can help prevent dental illnesses that can end up affecting your dog's kidney and liver function.

Dental cleaning might also be recommended, but it can cost a few hundred dollars to \$1,000, depending on your location. Some pet insurance companies, such as [Lemonade pet insurance](#), sell add-ons to help offset the cost of dental care, including routine dental cleanings.

Related: [Pet dental insurance explained](#)

Stimulate Your Dog's Brain and Body

A balance of physical and mental stimulation plays a significant role in your dog's health. It can also encourage good behavior while discouraging harmful behaviors that can wreak havoc on your patience and home.

As the saying goes: A tired dog is a good dog.

Exercise your dog every day

Regular exercise promotes bone, joint, muscle and organ health. Walking can also eliminate boredom and provide mental stimulation. You can also create an exercise routine with your pet, such as climbing stairs, going for a hike or running around the backyard.

While different sizes and breeds of dogs require varying levels of exercise, creating an exercise routine with your four-legged friend is essential.

Challenge your dog's brain

Man's best friend benefits from mental stimulation. Teach your dog new tricks, play new games and create puzzles. Since dogs have a heightened sense of smell, they love using their nose to explore. Try scattering a few treats around the home for your dog to find.

Create a slow-pace mealtime

Some dogs love gobbling up their food in one gulp. But eating too quickly may create digestive issues or result in vomiting.

Slow down your dog's eating habits. Consider a puzzle feeder at mealtime or place a tennis ball in their food bowl so they have to eat around it.

Keep Your Pet Safe

Dangers are lurking inside and outside of your home that could cause harm to your pooch. Here are some tips for keeping your dog safe and out of trouble.

Register your pup

State and local pet laws often require dog owners to register their pets. Check your local municipalities so you can ensure your dog is properly licensed. You'll want to attach the license to its collar to prove your dog is registered if it gets lost.

Consider a microchip

If your dog becomes lost, a microchip can help you locate your pet. Microchips are painless to implant and contain your contact information. They can usually be scanned at animal shelters and veterinary offices. Some pet insurance plans cover the cost of microchipping.

Secure trash, chemicals and toxins around your home

Dogs are curious creatures, but sometimes their curiosity can put them at risk of injury or illness—especially when exploring your home. To keep your dog out of harm's way, secure your trash, toxins and other chemicals found around the house.

Create a safe space for your dog

Dogs can feel anxious or stressed under certain situations, like the sound of thunder or noisy houseguests. Creating a safe space for your pet can provide comfort and security when it needs to retreat. Have a place in your home with some creature comforts such as a bed, blanket, toys and fresh water.

Clean your dog's stuff

Washing your dog's toys, blankets and bedding removes germs, dirt, pollen and other things that can irritate your pet. Some dogs suffer from seasonal allergies, so make sure you wash your dog's bedding on a regular basis.

Keep food out of your dog's reach

Food items such as avocados, chocolate and onions are toxic to dogs. Keeping these items out of their reach can help avoid some serious health consequences.

Generally, you shouldn't give your pup "people food" like your leftovers. But some "people food" items such as plain chicken, plain rice and canned pumpkin might be recommended by your vet for specific problems, like digestive issues.

Use a leash while in public

By always using a leash in public places, you can help your pet avoid accidents and injuries. For example, if your dog spots a squirrel and bolts after it, your dog could be at risk of getting hit by a car.

Train and Bond with Your Dog to Strengthen Your Relationship

Bonding and training your dog go hand-in-hand. By doing both, you are building a relationship of respect, communication and companionship.

Prioritize one-on-one time with your pup

Dogs flourish on love and affection from their owners. Prioritizing daily interactions with your pet strengthens your bond. You can do so by petting, playing and giving your dog treats.

Practice patience and consistency

Training a dog takes a lot of patience and consistency. Dogs can sense negative energy, so if they feel as though you're angry or agitated, they may not perform as well. If you're struggling to train your dog, consult with a professional or ask your vet for guidance. Remember, training your pup won't happen overnight, so stick with it—the results are worth it.

Consider positive reinforcement training

Practicing positive reinforcement training means you reward your pet for good behaviors and ignore the bad. This training method builds your dog's confidence, encourages cooperation and increases tolerance. On top of that, it can bolster your bond with your canine.

Seasonal Care Tips

Varying temperatures and weather conditions can impact how to care for your furry confidant. Here are some tips to keep in mind whether it's winter, spring, summer or fall.

Monitor your pet's time outside

In the winter, frigid temperatures can cause frostbite on your dog's ears, paws and tail. In the summer months, heat can dehydrate your pup and cause heat stroke. Make sure you keep an eye on the weather and limit your dog's time outside in extreme weather.

Related: [How To Keep Pets Safe During Extreme Summer Heat Waves](#)

Pay close attention to your dog's paws

In the winter months, salt and ice can contribute to cracks in the pads of your pet's feet. While in the summer months, hot asphalt or concrete can create burns and cause pain. Consider using booties to protect your dog's paws, or try walking in the grass.

Related: [Why Do Dogs Eat Grass?](#)

Steer clear of toxic algae

When hiking, walking or simply venturing around your property, a run-in with water containing toxic algae can make your dog very sick. Check your local Parks and Recreation department to identify bodies of water that could contain harmful bacteria or toxins that may cause harm to your dog.

Avoid leaving your pet in a hot car

Never leave your dog unsupervised in the car. Even if you think the weather outside is comfortable, temperatures can quickly reach dangerous levels, putting your dog at risk for serious illness or death. The temperature inside your car can increase by 20 degrees in just 10 minutes, according to the American Veterinary Medical Association.

Plan for Unexpected Vet Bills with Pet Insurance

Even with the best planning and preventive measures, unexpected accidents and illnesses can still happen, which can result in major vet bills. For example, your dog might tear its cruciate ligament while chasing a ball or it might get sick with a serious illness such as cancer.

A good way to help offset vet bills is with pet insurance. And it may be more affordable than you think. The average [cost of pet insurance](#) for a dog is \$35 per month, according to a Forbes Advisor analysis of pet insurance rates. That includes \$5,000 of annual coverage, a \$250 deductible and 90% reimbursement level.

If you're not sure if [pet insurance is worth it](#), here's a scenario to consider: Your dog tears its ACL and needs surgery. The vet bills are \$4,000. If you had pet insurance with a \$250 deductible and 90% reimbursement level, your out-of-pocket costs would be \$375 (\$250 deductible + 10% of \$3,750 = \$375).

You can find a good price by [comparing pet insurance quotes](#) online or by speaking with an independent insurance agent.

As pet owners, we all want the best for our furry family members. It is important to every pet parent that their fur friends are getting everything they need to be happy and healthy pets.

Taking care of a pet is more than just making sure their bowl is full or that the dog is walked and the litter box is scooped.

In honor of Responsible Pet Owner Month, we put together a [checklist of pet care musts](#) that pet owners should do in order to be the most responsible pet parents they can be.

Take the Time to Train Your Dog

Being a responsible canine pet parent means taking responsibility for training your dog.

Dog training is an ongoing duty for pet owners. "Dogs don't come already knowing how we would like them to behave, so we need to train them so they know what to do," says Zazie Todd, PhD, a certified dog trainer and founder of [Companion Animal Psychology](#).

Obedience training not only helps instill healthy doggy manners, but it also plays a big role in keeping your dog happy, healthy and safe.

“Teaching a dog to come when called is especially important and can prevent dogs from getting lost or running out into the road,” says Todd. “[You] can also train dogs to help them cope with things, like going to the vet, that they might otherwise find scary.”

Dog training also helps provide mental and physical stimulation for your pup. Todd explains, “Training with positive reinforcement is also a fun enrichment activity for dogs and a way to engage their brain.” With positive reinforcement training, you’ll praise and/or reward your pup with treats for performing the desired cue.

As a responsible pet parent, you should be including dog training in your daily routine. Whether it is making your dog sit before feeding them or having them wait for you to walk through doorways instead of allowing them to bolt through, you can create habits that help keep your pup’s manners sharp.

Make Time For Engaging Playtime

Playtime is an essential part of building and strengthening the bond between you and your pet. It allows you to establish a fun and positive relationship with your pet while also providing them with a productive outlet for their energy.

“Play helps to stop pets from getting bored, [getting] frustrated and developing behavior problems,” says Shermaine Wilson Cox, DVM, an Atlanta-based veterinarian.

As a responsible pet owner, you should set aside time to spend each day actively playing with your pet. Dr. Jim Carlson, DVM CVA CVTP, owner of Riverside Animal Clinic McHenry and Grove Animal Hospital & Holistic Center in Chicago's Northwest Suburbs, says, “Dogs are companion animals so it's good for their mental well-being to have positive interaction with their human.” He says, “All members of the household, animal or human, should be involved in playtime and walks.”

Not all pets enjoy the same types of play, so you will have to figure out what gets your pet up and moving. This means that you have to experiment with a variety of [cat toys](#) or [dog toys](#) until you find what they like.

Take Your Dog on Daily Walks

[Dog walks are an important part of your dog's exercise and socialization routine.](#) As a responsible pet parent, you must have time to take your pup for daily walks.

Every dog needs regular walks—but [how often and how long depends on the dog](#). There are dogs that may only enjoy short walks to do their business and then want to head back inside, and there are other dogs that may need to go for longer runs to burn off all their energy. “For those dogs, it can be helpful to include games such as fetch in their daily routine, or other activities such as [agility](#), dock diving or [nose work](#),” says Todd.

One thing to keep in mind when planning outdoor walks with your dog is the importance of using a [dog leash](#). It not only keeps your dog safe and under control, but it also allows other pet parents who may have reactive dogs or fearful dogs to walk their pups without worrying about your dog approaching without consent.

Off-leash time is important too. “It’s really good for dogs to get some off-leash time, both for the exercise and because it gives them the opportunity to choose what they’re doing for a while,” says Todd.

But you need to make sure that this off-leash time takes place in a secure and safe environment. Todd says that because leash rules are different everywhere, you will need to find a place that is suitable and legal for your dog to be running around.

This might mean taking them to a dog park or dog beach or on a hiking trail that allows dogs. Just remember to be respectful of other pet owners and do not just assume that your dog can freely approach other dogs without permission.

You'll also want to make sure your dog is trained to come back to you and follows cues when off-leash.

Clean Up After Your Pet

As a pet owner, you're responsible for your pet and the messes they make.

When you're walking your dog, always make sure to have [dog poop bags](#) on hand to pick up any mess he leaves behind on the sidewalk or in a neighbor's lawn. There are plenty of [dog poop bag dispensers](#) available that can be attached directly to your dog's leash, so there is no excuse to not pick up after your pup.

[Picking up after your dog](#) is an important pet parent responsibility because it not only helps keep walkways clean, but it also [prevents the spread of disease](#).

If you have a cat, a responsible pet owner always makes sure to clean out the [cat litter box](#) daily.

It is best to use an unscented, natural [cat litter](#) to mimic the sand or soil that a cat would naturally use to bury their waste. Dr. Carlson says, "Scented litters were designed to benefit us, not to benefit the cats. Using a more natural litter provides natural deodorizers and can help with minimizing bacteria. Bacteria produces odors that are common in the litter box."

"The litter box should be scooped at least once a day, preferably twice, and cleaned thoroughly and refilled with fresh litter at least once a week," says Todd, who also holds a certificate in Feline Behavior from International Cat Care.

"[When cleaning,] use a detergent that is safe for pets and does not have a strong smell, which cats might find off-putting," says Todd.

Make Sure Your Pet Is Groomed

Ensuring that your pet is properly groomed is a big part of being a responsible pet owner. From their coat to their nails, a well-groomed pet helps to ensure a healthy pet.

"Pets should be bathed on a regular basis with shampoos and conditioners that are specifically labeled for them. Make sure you follow the labeled directions and rinse the skin and coat thoroughly," says Dr. Cox. "Ears should be cleaned using ear cleaner that is approved for use in dogs and cats. Regular ear cleaning will prohibit the buildup of dirt and debris that could lead to ear infections."

Never use cotton swabs to clean your pet's ears. It's always good to ask your veterinarian to show you the proper way to do it before trying it at home.

The regularity of bathing for your pet is dependent on their coat and routine activities. You should talk with your veterinarian to decide on the best bathing routine for your pet.

Brushing your pet is also important. "Brushing the hair coat several times a week will keep your pet's hair from getting matted and will remove dead hair and potential allergens," says Dr. Cox.

You should also regularly check your pet's nails to make sure they are a healthy length. Dr. Carlson, says, "As a veterinarian, overgrown nails are one of the first things I notice."

Overgrown nails can cause a lot of pain and discomfort for your pet. Dr. Carlson explains, "Overgrown nails can create problems throughout the body, especially in the back and hips. When I see a pet come in with pain symptoms, the feet are the first place I look. Nail trims should be even and not just look at the nail itself, but the posture of the pet and how the pet moves after the nail trim."

If your pet does not tolerate getting their nails cut well, reach out to your veterinarian; they are always there to help.

Make Microchipping Your Pet Nonnegotiable

As a pet owner, you should take every step possible to make sure your pet is easily identifiable. From ID tags on their collars to GPS tracking equipment, there are a variety of ways you can help to ensure your pet never gets lost.

It doesn't matter how responsible you are with pet care—there's still a chance your pet could get lost. It is alarmingly common—and while collars, tags and GPS tracking devices can be helpful, the best and most permanent way to keep your pet protected if lost is a microchip.

"Unfortunately, one in three pets will get lost during their lifetime," says Dr. Cox. "Although pets commonly wear collars and tags, these forms of identification are capable of coming off and getting lost. Pet microchips add a second level of protection to bring your pet back home."

Getting a [pet microchip](#) dramatically increases the chance you'll be reunited if your pet gets lost. "Dogs with microchips are more than twice as likely to be returned home, and microchipped cats are 20 times more likely to be returned home," says Dr. Cox.

So, if your dog or cat isn't already microchipped, do the responsible thing and get it done ASAP.

Take Them for Routine Veterinary Checkups

As a pet owner, you're responsible for your pet's health, which includes regular veterinary care.

"Regular veterinary visits will allow veterinarians to prevent disease or provide early treatment if problems arise," says Dr. Cox.

So, how often is regularly? "Adult dogs and cats should see a veterinarian annually for a full comprehensive examination and bloodwork," says Dr. Cox.

If you have a senior dog or cat, it is recommended to make appointments with your veterinarian every six months. Dr. Carlson says, "Senior dogs and cats need biannual checkups. Pets can age several years over a six-month

period of time compared to humans, so a lot can change quickly.” This will help you catch changes in your pet’s health more efficiently so they can continue to live a healthy life in their golden years.

And while annual visits to the vet are a must, that’s not the only time you may need to schedule face time with your veterinarian. “Outside of regular physical exams, adult pets may need yearly vaccinations depending on their age and lifestyle, the region you live in, health concerns, disease risk or plans for travel,” says Dr. Cox.

Keep Up With Your Pet’s Dental Care

Taking care of a pet’s oral health is a vital part of being a responsible pet owner.

Neglecting your pet’s oral health can lead to periodontal disease—which not only puts their mouth in danger, but their overall health as well.

“Periodontal disease is caused by a bacterial infection of the tissues that surround the teeth, which ultimately ends up destroying the surrounding soft tissue and bone,” says Dr. Cox.

According to Dr. Cox, once the surrounding tissue and bone are compromised, teeth begin to loosen and can start to fall out. Compromised tissue and bone are also at risk of bacterial infection, which can put your pet at risk for heart, lung, liver and kidney disease.

If you want to keep your pet’s mouth healthy, schedule annual dental cleanings with your vet. “Dental cleanings under general anesthesia are important for several reasons,” says Dr. Cox.

“They allow the veterinarian to perform a full oral examination, which otherwise is difficult to obtain when the pet is fully awake. The veterinarian can check for the presence of oral masses, loose teeth, foreign bodies, gingivitis [or] tooth fractures. A thorough teeth cleaning will [also] rid the mouth of tartar buildup and will help prevent gingivitis, bad breath, and periodontal disease,” says Dr. Cox.

In between cleanings, regular brushings can keep your pet's teeth and gums healthier. "Outside of yearly dental cleanings, owners should brush their pets' teeth at least three times a week to prevent plaque or tartar buildup using specially formulated dog or cat toothpaste," says Dr. Cox.

Between brushings, Dr. Cox says that you can use [dog dental chews](#) or [cat dental treats](#) to help fight off dental disease.

Protect Them From Fleas, Ticks and Heartworms

Taking care of your pet's general health is important, as is being aware of some common threats to their health and taking the necessary steps to protect them.

Fleas and Ticks

"Fleas and ticks are two of the most common [pests] found on pets. If not prevented, fleas can lead to itching, hair loss, flea allergy dermatitis (an allergic reaction causing redness and inflammation of the skin), secondary skin infections, tapeworms and even severe anemia," says Dr. Cox.

Ticks can be even more problematic. "Ticks are capable of transmitting viral, bacterial and protozoal diseases. Examples of vector-borne tick diseases include Lyme disease, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and ehrlichiosis. These diseases can make your pet very ill if not properly diagnosed and treated," says Dr. Cox.

Luckily, protecting your pet from fleas and ticks is fairly simple. "For fleas and ticks, there are several products that owners can get over the counter or through a veterinarian, such as shampoos or sprays, topical medications and collars," says Dr. Cox.

If over-the-counter options aren't working as effectively (or if you live in an area known to have a flea or tick problem), you can ask your veterinarian for suggestions; they may prescribe you a [prescription flea and tick](#) option that they recommend.

Talk with your veterinarian to figure out which option suits your pet's needs best.

Heartworms

[Heartworm disease](#) is a serious and potentially life-threatening disease that is becoming more and more common within the US.

"Heartworms are parasites that are transmitted by mosquitos. After transmission, the larval worms travel through the blood and get lodged in the heart, lungs and nearby blood vessels. The worms continue to grow in these locations and can cause substantial damage to these organs prior to the pet showing any clinical signs of the disease," explains Dr. Cox.

"Heartworm disease can lead to coughing, exercise intolerance, difficulty breathing, fainting and even sudden death," she says.

Your vet can prescribe [pet prescription heartworm medicine](#) to protect your pet from heartworms—but in order to get access to the medication, you need to get your pet tested annually.

As a responsible pet parent, you should make sure your vet is testing for heartworms at your annual checkup and prescribing the medication necessary to prevent it as well.

BORDER COLLIE

The Beautiful Border Collie

Looking for a dog who is often smarter than you? Look no farther than the Border Collie! This super smart pooch has some great characteristics:

- Highly active and eager to serve a purpose

- Above-average intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Vigilant watchdog with a ready bark
- Alert, curious, and busy
- Athletic and agile
- Well suited as a companion or working dog

Those great traits find some balance in these other features:

- Needs a lot of activity and mental stimulation to avoid boredom vices
- Strong herding instinct can lead to chasing cars and small animals
- Prone to separation anxiety
- Needs frequent attention from her family
- Can be snappy with children
- Sheds quite a bit and needs to be brushed regularly



Widely considered the most intelligent dog breed, she can also be a handful. Without proper exercise and mental stimulation, she may develop problem behaviors.

Border Collies were bred as herding dogs in the countryside between Scotland and England. They are known for their intelligence and the intense

stare they use on flocks of sheep. They are extremely active dogs that do best when they have a job. Their natural herding abilities can lead to herding anything that moves, including children and small animals. Border Collies are generally a healthy breed with an average lifespan of 12-15 years.

Your Border Collie's Health

We know that because you care so much about your [dog](#), you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Border Collie. By knowing about health concerns specific to Border Collies, we can tailor a [preventive health plan](#) to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Border Collies to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Border Collies. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the article, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Sheepdog looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

General Health Information for your Border Collie



Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Border Collie is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't [prevent or treat dental disease](#), your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damaging her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Border Collie's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

Infections

Border Collies are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through [vaccination](#), which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

[Obesity](#) can be a significant health problem in Border Collies. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and [heart disease](#). Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your Sheepdog's body, inside and out. Everything from [fleas and ticks](#) to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, [heartworms](#), and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause [pain](#), discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we [test](#) for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Border Collie is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically

remove the testicles. [Spaying or neutering](#) decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for Border Collies



Hip Dysplasia

You've probably heard of hip dysplasia, an inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis. Hip dysplasia is common in Border Collies. You may notice that he has lameness in his hind legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We'll take [X-rays](#) of your dog's joints to identify the disease as early as possible, and we can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to avoid discomfort and pain. [Surgery](#) is sometimes considered in severe and life-limiting cases of hip dysplasia. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering.

Bone Disorder

When Border Collie [puppies](#) are allowed to grow too quickly, the cartilage in their joints may not attach to the bones properly. This problem is known as osteochondritis dissecans, or OCD. If this occurs, surgery may be required to fix the problem. Our recommended growth rate for Border Collie puppies is no more than four pounds per week. To maintain this rate, don't overfeed him and don't supplement with additional calcium. Feed a large-breed puppy diet rather than an adult or regular puppy diet. And weigh your puppy every three to four weeks to make sure he's on track.

Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Border Collies are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If

your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us at [\(720\) 738-6234](tel:(720)738-6234) or call an [emergency](#) hospital.

Thyroid Problems

Border Collies are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, fearfulness, aggression, and other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood test annually to screen for this disease. Treatment is usually as simple as replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

Separation Anxiety

Some dogs become bored or anxious quickly when away from their human companions, especially if they are not getting enough exercise or mental stimulation. A scheduled routine, lots to do, and a stable home environment can help prevent common behavior problems associated with separation anxiety. Also, make sure your Border Collie gets alone time as well as playtime as a puppy so he becomes used to being by himself for short periods.

Noise Phobia

Fear of storms, fireworks, and loud noises is common in dogs of all breeds. Dogs are at risk of hurting themselves when terrified, especially if they frantically try to escape or chew through doors, kennels, or walls. Working with us to find an appropriate plan for your Border Collie is a process we will approach together. We want to address his problem when signs first appear as fear behavior tends to get worse with time.

Cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Collie will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his golden years. Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

Multidrug Resistance

Multidrug resistance is a genetic defect in a gene called MDR1. If your Border Collie has this mutation, it can affect the way his body processes different drugs, including substances commonly used to treat parasites, diarrhea, and even cancer. For years, veterinarians simply avoided using ivermectin in herding breeds, but now there is a DNA test that can specifically identify dogs who are at risk for side effects from certain medications. Testing your pet early in life can prevent drug-related toxicity.



Overheating Disorder: Malignant Hyperthermia

Some Border Collies seem to have a defective “internal thermostat” and can develop dangerously high body temperatures leading to heat stroke, muscle rigidity, and organ damage. This condition is called malignant hyperthermia— malignant, meaning deadly or dangerous, and hyperthermia, referring to overheating. This is especially common during and after anesthesia, thus we will monitor your pet’s temperature closely to prevent complications following surgical or dental procedures. DNA testing for a predisposition to hyperthermia is available, and carriers should be screened and identified before breeding.

Heart Disease

Border Collies are susceptible to a condition called patent ductus arteriosus, or PDA, in which a small vessel that carries blood between two parts of the [heart](#) does not close as it should shortly after birth. This results in too much blood being carried to the lungs, causing fluid build-up and strain on the heart. Outward signs may be mild or severe, including coughing, fatigue during exercise, weight loss, shortness of breath, and weakness in the hind limbs. We listen for a specific type of heart murmur to diagnose this problem during your pet's examinations. If your pal has this condition, we may recommend surgery to close the problematic vessel.

Liver Problems

Your Border Collie is more likely than other dogs to have a liver disorder called portosystemic shunt (PSS). Some of the blood supply that should go to the liver goes around it instead, depriving the liver of the blood flow it needs to grow and function properly. If your friend has PSS, his liver cannot remove toxins from his bloodstream effectively. To check for this problem, we'll conduct a liver function test in addition to a standard pre-anesthetic panel every time he undergoes anesthesia. If he develops symptoms such as stunted growth or seizures, we'll test his blood and possibly conduct an ultrasound scan of his liver. Surgery may be needed, but in some cases, we can treat with a special diet and medication.

Nutrient Malabsorption

Cobalamin (Vitamin B12) is an essential nutrient necessary for life. A genetic defect, more likely in Border Collies than other dogs, disrupts the absorption of this nutrient in the intestines causing poor appetite, stunted growth, protein loss, and low red and white blood cell counts. Don't worry; we can test for this defect with blood work. If your buddy is affected, cobalamin injections will be needed for the rest of his life. Luckily, this disease is rare.

Blood Disorder

A relatively rare blood disorder called Pelger-Huet anomaly can occur in your Border Collie. If he is a carrier of the disease, his infection-fighting white blood cells will look abnormal under the microscope, but will operate normally. Puppies that inherit a copy of this abnormal gene from both parents, however, usually die before or shortly after birth. For this reason, it is important to diagnose breeding dogs who are carriers of this defect so they don't pass it along to their offspring.

Nerve Disease

Neuronal ceroid lipofuscinosis, or NCL, is a progressive neurologic disease found in several breeds, including Border Collies. Clinical signs usually appear in younger dogs around one to three years of age. In the early stages, rear leg weakness and imbalance can occur. Symptoms may progress to weakness involving all four legs, and some dogs also lose vision. There is currently no effective treatment for this disease, but a genetic test is available. Dogs carrying the mutation should not be used for breeding since it is readily passed to future generations.

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Border Collies can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Border Collies. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.

- Pannus is like a suntan on your dog's eyeball. In affected breeds, inflammatory cells infiltrate the cornea (the clear part of the eye), which then darkens with exposure to ultraviolet light, and may lead to complete blindness. It's considered to have a genetic component since the condition is predominant in certain breeds, like your Border Collie. We'll watch his eyes closely for early signs and start preventive eye medications if needed. Doggie sunglasses are also an option to help reduce sun exposure.
- Collie eye anomaly is a genetically linked disease that causes abnormal development of the eyes in Border Collies. In severe cases, the disease can lead to blindness. Unfortunately, there is no treatment. It is important to give your pet a thorough eye examination prior to breeding.
- Progressive retinal atrophy (PRA) is an inherited disease in which the eyes are genetically programmed to go blind. Unfortunately, Border Collies are a bit more likely than other dogs to have this condition. PRA is not painful, but also not curable. In dogs with this gene, early symptoms such as night blindness or dilated pupils generally begin around three to five years of age. A genetic test is available for this condition.

Taking Care of Your Border Collie at Home



Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Border Collies. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Sheepdog live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- Brush her coat at least weekly.
- Border Collies generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!
- Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- She's a very smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.
- She's an athletic and acrobatic dog that excels at agility competitions, flyball, and herding events.
- Border Collies can be sound sensitive, so be prepared for thunderstorms, New Year's Eve, and the Fourth of July!
- Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
- Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Border Collie needs help.

Office Calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Change in appetite or water consumption
- Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping

- Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- Dull coat, hair loss; sluggish, weight gain
- Slow or stunted growth; sometimes seizes after eating
- Anxiety, destructive behaviors, vocalization, hiding, panting, or drooling

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- Leg stiffness; reluctance to rise, sit, use stairs, run, jump; “bunny hopping”
- Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- Lethargy, drooling, or abnormal behavior following drug administration
- Fatigue during exercise, coughing, or shortness of breath

The Standard Poodle may be a “fancy” breed, but these dogs can have a great place in everyday families. They’re considered:

- Energetic, active, and athletic
- Hypoallergenic coat sheds very little
- Above-average in intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Quirky, entertaining personality
- People-oriented and eager to please
- Good with children and other pets

Those “fancy” needs can include:

- Needs a lot of exercise and mental stimulation

- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Sensitive by nature, a bit slow to mature
- Has a tendency to bark quite a bit if not trained out of this habit
- Prone to boredom and separation anxiety, with associated chewing and howling behaviors
- Coat requires regular grooming



Smart as a whip and full of fun, the Standard Poodle can easily become your best friend. She is a joyful and clever companion that enjoys being the center of attention.

The Standard Poodle is one of three Poodle varieties, all of which share the same breed standard and differ only in size. Poodles originated in Germany and were bred to hunt waterfowl. The characteristic “Poodle Clip” was developed by hunters to help the dogs swim more efficiently while leaving hair only over the joints to protect them from the cold. Poodles are quick to learn and have comical personalities; the Standard Poodle tends to be calmer than the two smaller varieties. Standard Poodles are obedient, lively, and loyal family companions. The Standard Poodle is a generally healthy breed with an [average lifespan of 12-15 years](#).

Your Standard Poodle’s Health

We know that because you care so much about your [dog](#), you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Poodle. By knowing about health concerns specific to Standard Poodles, we can tailor a [preventive health plan](#) to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet’s breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we’ve described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Standard Poodles to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can’t cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Standard Poodles. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet’s unique medical needs. At the end of the article, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Poodle looking and feeling her best. You will know what to

watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

General Health Information for your Standard Poodle

Dental Disease

[Dental disease](#) is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Standard Poodle is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't [prevent or treat dental disease](#), your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Poodle's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.



Infections

Standard Poodles are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through [vaccination](#), which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity can be a significant health problem in Standard Poodles. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal [food](#) when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can “love her to death” with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of [worms](#) and bugs can invade your Poodle's body, inside and out. Everything from [fleas and ticks](#) to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, [heartworms](#), and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Poodle is to have her [spayed \(neutered for males\)](#). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this [surgery](#) also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip [X-rays](#) or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for Standard Poodles



Bloat

Gastric dilatation volvulus, also known as GDV or bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests. This means your Poodle is more at risk than other breeds. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. The twisting cuts off the blood supply to the stomach and sometimes to the spleen. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as half an hour. Your dog may retch or heave (but little or nothing comes up), act restless, have an enlarged abdomen, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). Preventive surgery in which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it is unlikely to twist is an option. If you see symptoms, take your pet to an [emergency](#) hospital immediately!

Heart Disease

Standard Poodles are especially prone to a life-threatening [heart condition](#) known as dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, in which the heart becomes so large, thin,

and weak that it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. As this problem advances, he may act weak or tired, faint or collapse, breathe in a labored way, or cough. We'll conduct a yearly electrical heart screening (ECG) and/or an echocardiogram starting at age one to look for abnormal heart rhythms early. If found, we'll treat this condition with medication and may also recommend dietary supplementation.

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Standard Poodles can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- Glaucoma, an eye condition that affects Standard Poodles and people too, is an extremely painful disease that rapidly leads to blindness if left untreated. Symptoms include squinting, watery eyes, bluing of the cornea (the clear front part of the eye), and redness in the whites of the eyes. Pain is rarely noticed by pet owners though it is frequently there and can be severe. People who have certain types of glaucoma often report it feels like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick! Yikes! In advanced cases, the eye may look enlarged or swollen like it's bulging. We'll perform an annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and start treatment as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical [emergency](#). If you see symptoms, don't wait to call us, go to an emergency clinic!
- Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Poodles. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.

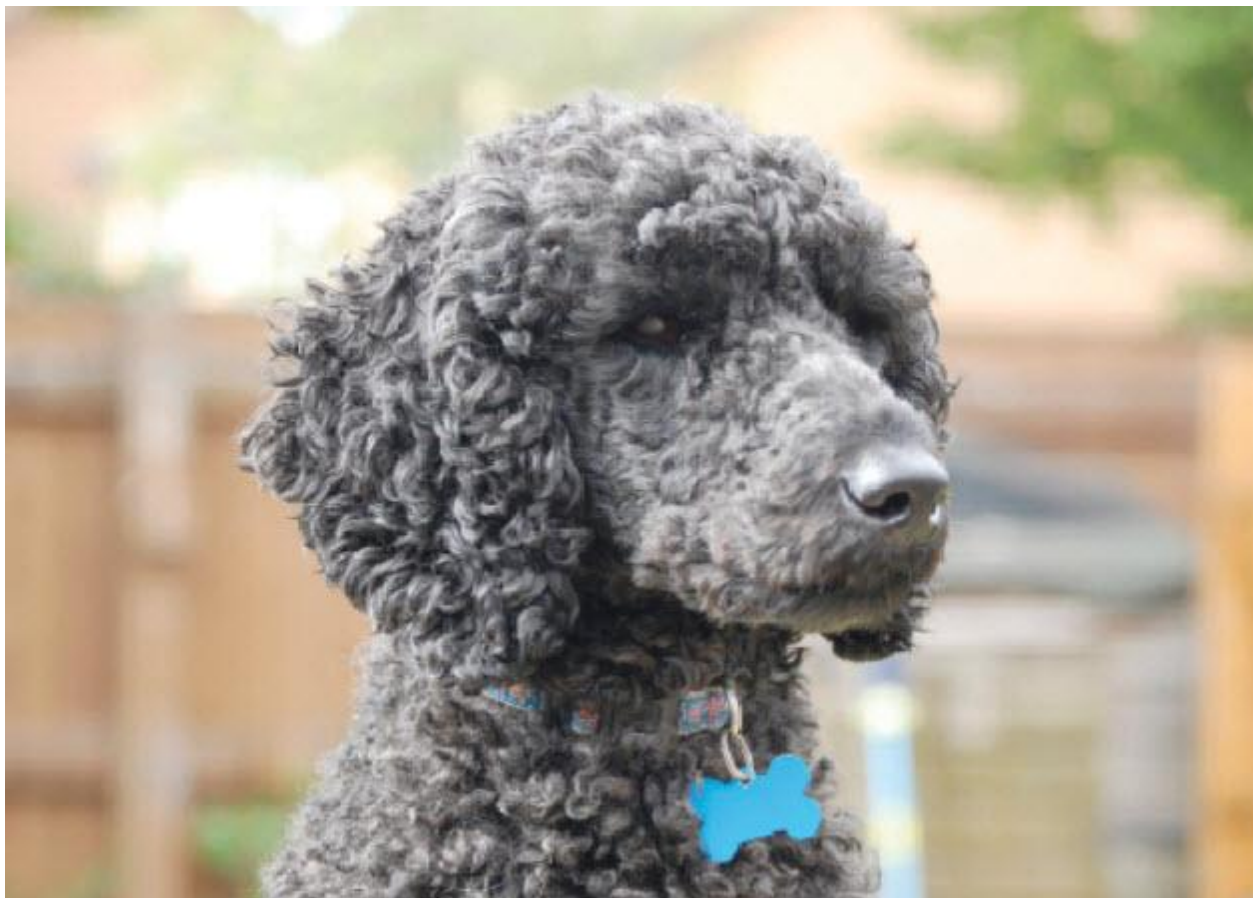
Hypoadrenocorticism (Addison's)

Addison's Disease is an endocrine system disorder that occurs when the adrenal glands fail to produce enough hormones to keep the body functioning normally. Left untreated, hypoadrenocorticism can be fatal. Symptoms often mimic many other diseases, but we can run a [specialized blood test](#) to check for this specific

condition. Though this disease can occur in any type of dog, Poodles are more at risk. We'll be watching for clinical signs at every exam and will periodically check his electrolyte levels to screen for this problem.

Hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's)

Cushing's Disease is a malfunction of the adrenal glands that causes them to produce too much steroid hormone. This is a common problem in dogs, and your Poodle is more likely than other dogs to be affected. The condition usually develops slowly, and the early signs are easily missed. Symptoms include drinking and urinating more than normal, increased appetite, and reduced activity level followed later by a potbelly, thin skin, and hair loss. Treatment usually includes oral medications and requires close coordination with us to ensure correct dosing.



Bleeding Disorders

There are several types of inherited bleeding disorders that occur in dogs. They range in severity from very mild to very severe. Many times a pet seems normal until a serious injury occurs or surgery is performed, and then severe bleeding can result. Standard Poodles are particularly prone to some relatively rare diseases of the blood.

- Hemolytic anemia and thrombocytopenia occur when the immune system goes haywire and starts attacking the pet's own red blood cells or platelets. If the immune system destroys red blood cells, your dog quickly becomes anemic, weak, and lethargic. His gums will look whitish or yellow instead of a normal bright pink color. If the immune system destroys platelets, his blood won't clot properly and he'll have bruises or abnormal bleeding. We'll perform diagnostic testing for blood clotting to check for these problems before we perform any surgeries. To slow or stop the immune system's destruction of cells, we'll prescribe steroids and other immune-suppressive drugs. Sometimes an emergency transfusion of red blood cells or platelets is needed.
- Von Willebrand's disease is a blood clotting disorder frequently found in Standard Poodles. We'll conduct diagnostic testing for blood clotting times or a specific DNA blood test for Von Willebrand's disease and other similar disorders to check for this problem before we perform surgery.

Bone and Joint Problems

A number of different musculoskeletal problems have been reported in Standard Poodles. While it may seem overwhelming, each condition can be diagnosed and treated to prevent undue pain and suffering. With diligent observation at home and knowledge about the diseases that may affect your friend's bones, joints, or muscles, you will be able to take great care of him throughout his life.

- Sometimes your Poodle's kneecap (patella) may slip out of place. This is called patellar luxation. You might notice that your pet, while running, suddenly picks up a back leg or skips and hops for a few strides. He might then kick his leg out sideways to pop the kneecap back in place. These are common signs of patellar luxation. If the problem is mild and involves only one leg, your friend may not require much treatment beyond arthritis

medication. When symptoms are severe, surgery may be needed to realign the kneecap to keep it from luxating further.

- Both hips and elbows are at risk for dysplasia, an inherited disease that causes the joints to develop improperly and results in arthritis. Stiffness in your Poodle's elbows or hips may become a problem for him, especially as he matures. You may notice that he begins to show lameness in his legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to minimize discomfort and pain. We'll take [X-rays](#) of your dog's bones to identify issues as early as possible. Surgery is also sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering!

Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Standard Poodles are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and [call us](#) or an [emergency](#) hospital.

Diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is a fairly common disease in dogs. Any breed can be affected, but Poodles have an above average incidence. Dogs with diabetes are unable to regulate the metabolism of sugars in their bodies and require daily insulin injections. Diabetes is a serious condition and one that is important to diagnose and treat as early as possible. Symptoms include increased eating, drinking, and urination, along with weight loss. If he shows signs, we will conduct lab tests to determine if he has this condition and discuss treatment options with you.

Treatment requires a serious commitment of time and resources. Well-regulated diabetic dogs today have the same life expectancy as other canines.

Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy “atopy”, and Poodles often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

Skin Conditions

Poodles are prone to a variety of skin problems, including sebaceous adenitis. You may notice that your dog has dry, scaly skin with patches of hair loss along the top of his head, back of the neck, and along his back. This condition typically develops when your dog is between one and five years of age. Treatment is generally long term, and we’ll likely try a combination of approaches to determine which is most effective with your dog. The response to treatment is highly variable, but you’ll almost always need to give fatty acid supplements and use special shampoos to remove dead skin and hair. The earlier the skin is checked out, the better the results.

Kidney Disease

Glomerulonephropathy is an inherited disease that slowly damages your Standard Poodle’s kidneys, causing them to fail, often at an [early age](#). Because damaged kidneys leak protein, we may be able to diagnose this disease by annually testing your pet’s urine for excessive protein. Early detection leads to a happier pet and an easier, more affordable treatment plan. We may also recommend a special diet as part of his therapy.

Cancer

[Cancer](#) is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Poodle will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his golden years. Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are

treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

Dental Abnormalities

Teeth abnormalities are often genetically induced and are relatively common in dogs, especially in purebred dogs like your Poodle. An overbite or underbite is called a malocclusion or a bad bite. Oligodontia is a condition in which only a few teeth are present. Misaligned teeth can also occur and cause lots of problems, but can usually be corrected with braces or extractions. (Yes, dogs can get braces!) We want to keep your buddy's teeth healthy, so we will be watching his developing teeth closely.

Thyroid Problems

Poodles are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, fearfulness, aggression, and other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood test annually to screen for this disease. Treatment is usually as simple as replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

Taking Care of Your Standard Poodle at Home



Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Poodles. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Poodle live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- Regular brushing and grooming is needed to keep her coat beautiful.
- Standard Poodles often have serious problems with their teeth, so you'll need to brush them at least three times a week!
- Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- She's a smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.
- She loves the water, and swimming is a great form of exercise for your Standard Poodle!
- She is an athletic dog that excels at dog sports like obedience, agility, and even hunting.
- Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
- Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Standard Poodle needs help.

Office Calls

[Give us a call](#) for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Change in appetite or water consumption
- Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping

- Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- Dull coat, hair loss; sluggish, weight gain
- Lumps or bumps – regardless of size

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- Dry heaving or a large, tight, painful abdomen
- Fainting, collapse, breathing issues, coughing
- General listlessness, droopy facial expression, vomiting, diarrhea
- Drinks and urinates more, eats more; potbelly, poor haircoat
- Gums that are a color other than bright pink
- Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- Increased hunger and thirst, weight loss
- Leg stiffness; reluctance to rise, sit, use stairs, run, or jump; “bunny hopping”

GERMAN SHEPHERD

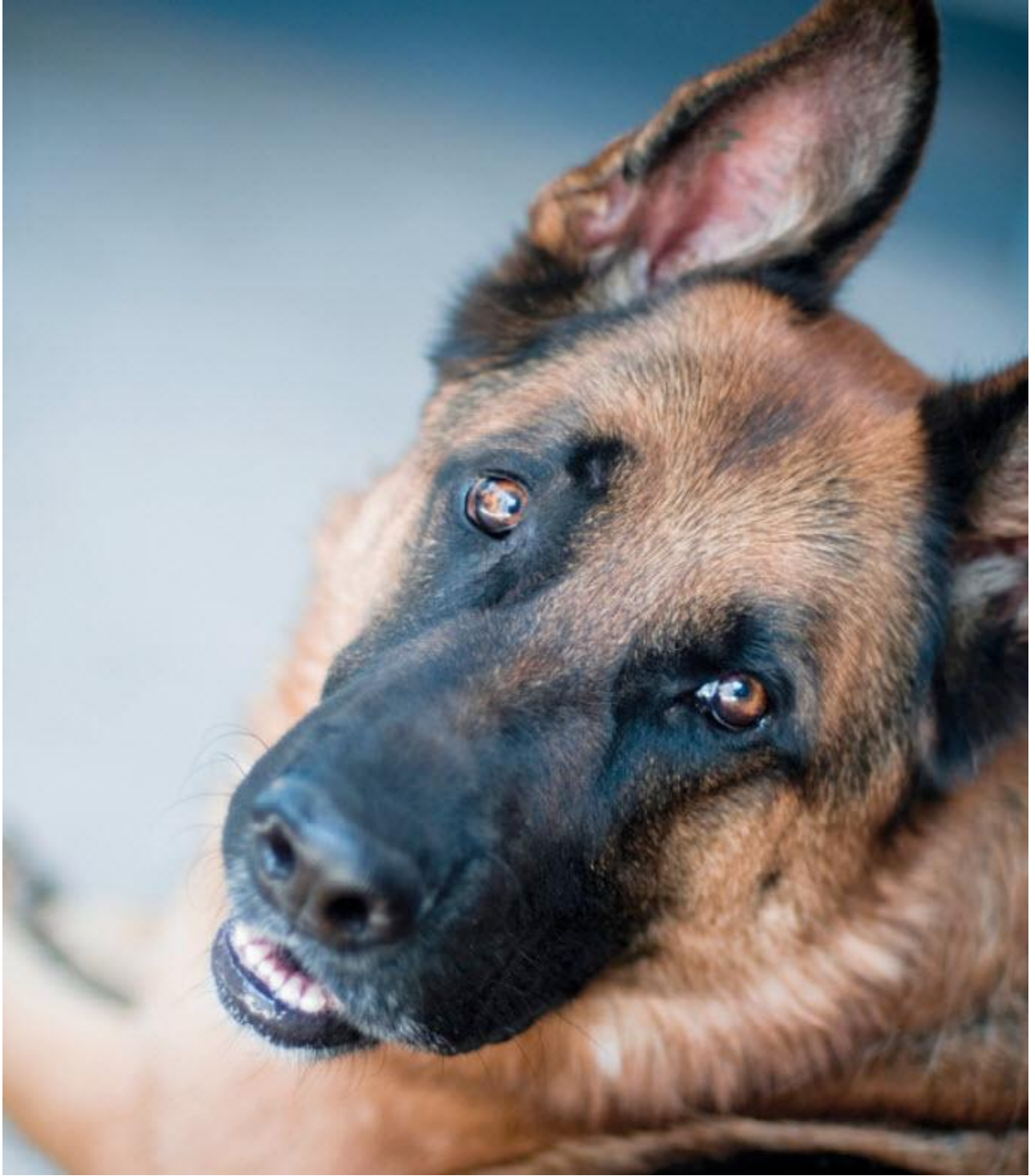
The Steady Shepherd

Loyal, steadfast, and vigilant, the German Shepherd exemplifies the faithful “Fido”:

- Well suited as a companion, family dog, or working dog
- Energetic, active, and athletic
- Above-average intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Devoted, loyal, and protective
- Sweet, playful, and friendly
- Trusting and affectionate

As a breed, however, German Shepherds often show these other traits:

- Easily bored if not given something to do, which may lead to barking or chewing
- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Overprotective of family and territory if not socialized properly
- Can have an unstable temperament if not bred properly, including excessive barking, hyperactivity, or aggression
- Suspicious of strangers
- Prone to a number of health problems



She is a faithful companion that can excel at most anything. With early socialization and confident leadership, she is a cheerful and dependable addition to any family.

The German Shepherd Dog originated in Germany in 1899. Initially bred as a herding dog, the Shepherd has since become the world's leading police, guard, and military working dog. The German Shepherd has consistently been one of the most popular breeds in the United States since the early 1920s with a rise in fame then attributed to canine film stars Rin-Tin-Tin and Strongheart. GSDs are favored working dogs because of their strength, intelligence, versatility, and obedient natures. The German Shepherd is unmatched in her devotion and courage. She is eager to serve a greater cause with her human companions. The German Shepherd is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 12-13 years.

Your German Shepherd Dog's Health

We know that because you care so much about your [dog](#), you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Shepherd. By knowing about health concerns specific to German Shepherd Dogs, we can tailor a [preventive health](#) plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in German Shepherd Dogs to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for German Shepherd Dogs. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the article, we have also included a description

of what you can do at home to keep your GSD looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

General Health Information for your German Shepherd Dog

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your German Shepherd is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't [prevent or treat dental disease](#), your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your German Shepherd's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.



Infections

German Shepherd Dogs are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through [vaccination](#), which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

[Obesity](#) can be a significant health problem in German Shepherd Dogs. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give

her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of [worms](#) and bugs can invade your GSD's body, inside and out. Everything from [fleas and ticks](#) to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, [heartworms](#), and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. The Vida Veterinary Care doctors will also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Shepherd is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. [Spaying or neutering](#) decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for German Shepherd Dogs

Bloat

Gastric dilatation volvulus, also known as GDV or bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests. This means your Shepherd is more at risk than other breeds. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. The twisting cuts off the blood supply to the stomach and sometimes to the spleen. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as half an hour. Your dog may retch or heave (but little or nothing comes up), act restless, have an enlarged abdomen, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). Preventive [surgery](#) in which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it is unlikely to twist is an option. If you see symptoms, take your pet to an [emergency](#) hospital immediately!



Digestive Disorders

Several inherited conditions can cause recurring vomiting, diarrhea, or weight loss in your Shepherd. These conditions include pancreatic or intestinal disease, food sensitivities, and food allergies. Some of these problems may begin very early in life. To help prevent these conditions, feed only a high-quality pet food (we can help you choose the right diet) and, most importantly, avoid snacks and table food. Treats that are high in fat, sodium, or artificial ingredients (like people food) are particularly bad for your buddy's digestion. The healthcare chart included in this care guide lists the specific digestive disorders your pet may encounter.

Bleeding Disorders

Your breed is prone to a bleeding disorder called hemophilia. We'll conduct [diagnostic testing](#) to assess his blood clotting time before we perform surgery. This is an important test, as we may not know your pet has this disorder until severe bleeding occurs during surgery or after a serious injury.

Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency

The pancreas has two major functions: regulating blood sugar and helping digest food. Digestive enzymes are produced by the exocrine part of the pancreas. GSDs are at an increased risk of having too few digestive enzymes, a disorder called exocrine pancreatic insufficiency. This causes inadequate digestion and absorption of nutrients leading to weight loss; foul-smelling, greasy diarrhea; and a dry and flaky coat due to his inability to absorb dietary fats. Lifelong [dietary supplementation](#) of digestive enzymes is an effective therapy.

Bone and Joint Problems

A number of different musculoskeletal problems have been reported in German Shepherd Dogs. While it may seem overwhelming, each condition can be diagnosed and treated to prevent undue pain and suffering. With diligent observation at home and knowledge about the diseases that may affect your friend's bones, joints, or muscles, you will be able to take great care of him throughout his life.

- Intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) is a common condition in Shepherds. The disease is caused when the jelly-like cushion between one or more vertebrae slips or ruptures, causing the disc to press on the spinal cord. If your dog is suddenly unable or unwilling to jump or go up stairs, is reluctant to move around, has a hunched back, cries out, or refuses to eat or go potty, he is likely in severe pain. He may even experience sudden paralysis—he may drag his back feet or be unable to get up or use his back legs. If you see these symptoms, don't wait! Call us or an emergency clinic immediately! In many cases

involving paralysis, we'll recommend surgical removal of the ruptured discs (within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms for the best results). For less severe cases, rest and medication may resolve the problem. And as with so many other diseases, weight control helps reduce the risk of IVDD. You should also provide ramps or steps for your pet from [puppyhood](#) on to prevent your dog from stressing his back by jumping on and off of the furniture.

- Both hips and elbows are at risk for dysplasia, an inherited disease that causes the joints to develop improperly and results in arthritis. Stiffness in your GSD's elbows or hips may become a problem for him, especially as he matures. You may notice that he begins to show lameness in his legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to minimize discomfort and pain. We'll take [X-rays](#) of your dog's bones to identify issues as early as possible. Surgery is also sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering!
- Growing Shepherds can suffer from a painful inflammation of the long bones in the legs called eosinophilic panosteitis, or pano or eo-pan for short. It usually starts around six to ten months of age and shifts from leg to leg. We'll look for this condition upon examination; if your pal exhibits pain when the area is squeezed or palpated, we'll take X-rays to diagnose the problem. Panosteitis usually causes no permanent damage, but requires pain medication. If your dog has this condition and develops an abnormal gait to compensate for the sore leg(s), rehabilitation exercises may be required.



Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and German Shepherd Dogs are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us or an [emergency](#) hospital.

Heart Disease

German Shepherd Dogs are prone to multiple types of [heart disease](#), which can occur both early and later in life. We'll listen for heart murmurs and abnormal heart rhythms when we examine your pet. When indicated, we'll perform an annual heart health check, which may include X-rays, an ECG, or an echocardiogram, depending on your dog's risk factors. Early detection of heart disease often allows us to treat with medication that can prolong your pet's life for many years. Veterinary dental care and weight control also go a long way in preventing heart disease.

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, German Shepherd Dogs can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in [older Shepherds](#). We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.
- Pannus is like a suntan on your dog's eyeball. In affected breeds, inflammatory cells infiltrate the cornea (the clear part of the eye), which then darkens with exposure to ultraviolet light, and may lead to complete blindness. It's considered to have a genetic component, since the condition is predominant in certain breeds, like your Shepherd. We'll watch his eyes closely for early signs and start preventive eye medications if needed. Doggie sunglasses are also an option to help reduce sun exposure.

Cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your GSD will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his golden years. Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! The healthcare chart included in this care guide lists the specific cancers your pet may encounter. We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

Hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's)

Cushing's Disease is a malfunction of the adrenal glands that causes them to produce too much steroid hormone. This is a common problem in dogs, and your Shepherd is more likely than other dogs to be affected. The condition usually develops slowly, and the early signs are easily missed. Symptoms include drinking and urinating more than normal, increased appetite, and reduced activity level followed later by a potbelly, thin skin, and hair loss. Treatment usually includes oral medications and requires close coordination with us to ensure correct dosing.

Neurological Disease

A genetically linked neurological condition, known as wobbler disease or wobbler syndrome, causes a wobbly, drunken gait in affected pets. Wobbler disease is the result of a narrowing of the vertebrae in the neck that pinches the spinal cord and associated nerves. When pinched, the nerves do not send signals to the brain as they should causing the pet to be unable to feel his feet. The first signs you will often notice with wobbler disease are unstable hind legs, stumbling, and sometimes falling. Treatment options include medications, neck braces, rehabilitation exercise programs, and surgery.

- Degenerative myelopathy is a neurologic condition, similar to ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease in people, that causes weakness and poor nerve function in the hind legs. It affects GSDs more frequently than other breeds. If your dog has this disease, he will become increasingly weak and disabled in the hind legs, eventually suffering from paralysis in his hindquarters, which also leads to incontinence. Rehabilitation, exercise, [acupuncture](#), and dietary supplements can be helpful, but there is no cure for degenerative myelopathy. A genetic test is available to determine whether your dog is at risk for this heritable disease.

Diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is a fairly common disease in dogs. Any breed can be affected, but German Shepherds have an above average incidence. Dogs with diabetes are unable to regulate the metabolism of sugars in their bodies and require daily insulin injections. Diabetes is a serious condition and one that is important to diagnose and treat as early as possible. Symptoms include increased eating, drinking, and urination, along with weight loss. If he shows signs, we will conduct [lab tests](#) to determine if he has this condition and discuss treatment options with you. Treatment requires a serious commitment of time and resources. Well-regulated diabetic dogs today have the same life expectancy as other canines.

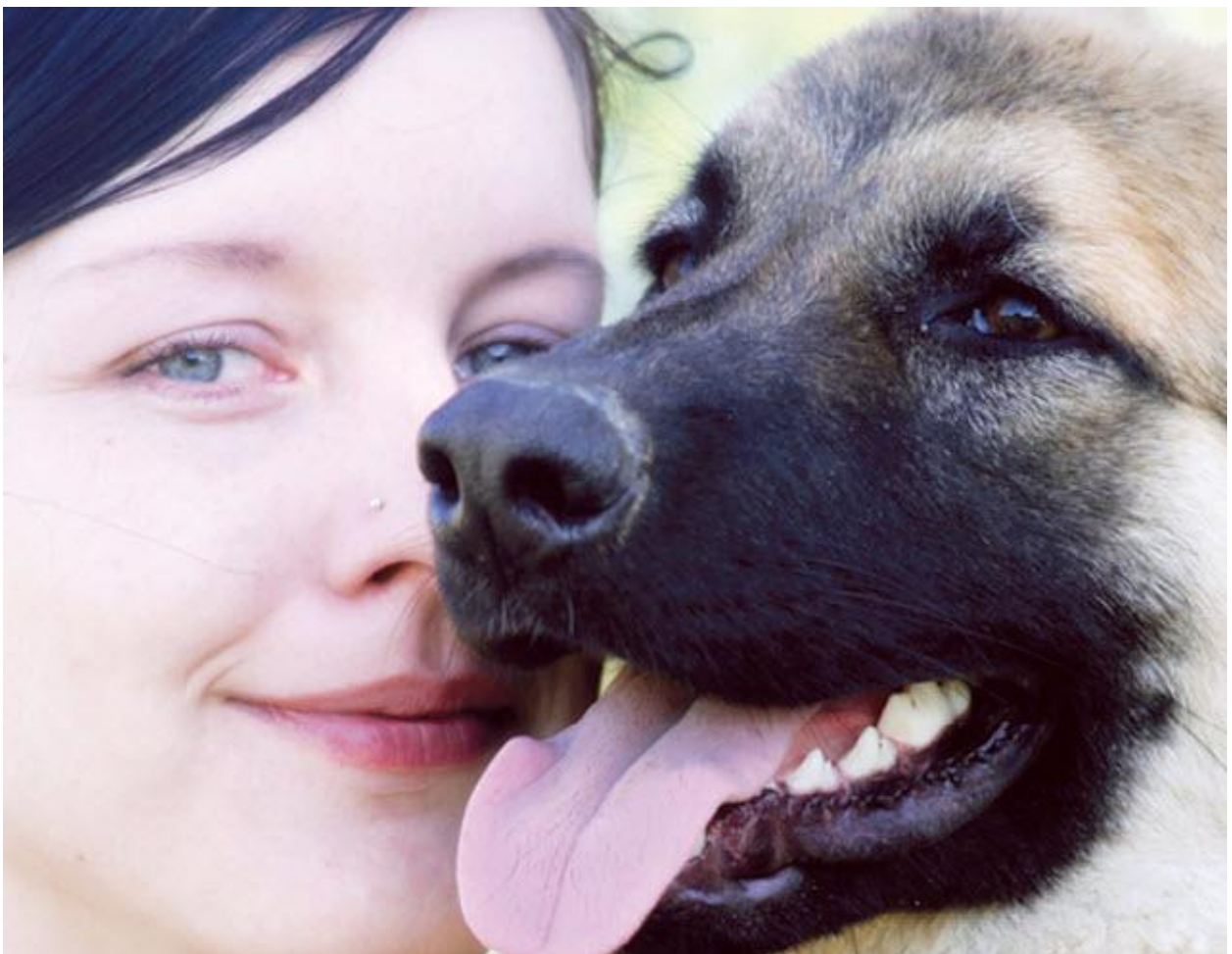
Anal Gland Problems

German Shepherds are prone to a painful, longterm condition in which the area around the anus becomes inflamed or develops sores. Signs include bleeding, constipation, licking of the area, smelly discharge around the rectum, and straining or apparent pain when defecating. This condition can be difficult to treat and requires lifelong medications, prescription food, and sometimes even surgery.

Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy “atopy”, and Shepherds often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

Taking Care of Your German Shepherd Dog at Home



Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Shepherds. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your GSD live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn’t put in her mouth.
- She needs a thorough brushing at least weekly most of the year. Twice a year she blows her coat and loses crazy amounts of hair; daily brushing is recommended during this time.
- German Shepherd Dogs generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!
- Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don’t worry—we’ll show you how!
- She has a high prey drive, so she needs to be leash walked and a fenced yard is a must.
- She’s a large, smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she’ll get bored. That’s when the naughty stuff starts.
- Naturally a bit wary, she’s distrustful of strangers; bond her to children early to trigger protective behaviors.
- Keep your dog’s diet consistent and don’t give her people food.

- Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your German Shepherd Dog needs help.

Office Calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Change in appetite or water consumption
- Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- Dry heaving or a large, tight, painful abdomen
- Greasy poops, weight loss, dry flaking coat
- Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- Coughing, exercise intolerance, rapid breathing at rest

- Drinks and urinates more, eats more; potbelly, poor haircoat
- Increased hunger and thirst, weight loss
- Straining to defecate, licking of the area around the rectum, smelly discharge or bleeding around the anus
- Ongoing vomiting, weight loss, and/or diarrhea
- Leg stiffness; reluctance to rise, sit, use stairs, run, or jump; “bunny hopping”

GOLDEN RETRIEVER

ure Gold

The popular Golden Retriever exhibits traits that many families rely on:

- Even-tempered, affectionate, and happy-go-lucky
- Good with kids and other pets
- Large, strong, and athletic
- Above-average intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Loves to play games, especially fetch
- People-oriented and eager to please

With these undeniable positives come a few other characteristics to carefully consider:

- Sheds quite a bit
- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Needs a lot of activity and mental stimulation to avoid boredom vices
- Is a bit “mouthy”—likes to carry and chew things
- Has a tendency to bark or howl when excited or faced with the unfamiliar
- Prone to a number of health problems



A joyful playmate and a reliable shoulder to lean on, the Golden is often referred to as America's sweetheart.

Golden Retrievers were first bred in the early 1800s in Scotland as hunting dogs. Although they are still used for hunting, Goldens also excel at many

other activities, including search and rescue jobs and guide work. They require ample exercise—swimming in particular is a great outlet for their endless energy, and most Goldens love it! Their beautiful coats require brushing and in some climates a summer trim may be in order. Goldens are intelligent, understanding, and eager to please their families. The Golden Retriever is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 10-15 years.

Your Golden Retriever's Health

We know that because you care so much about your [dog](#), you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Golden. By knowing about health concerns specific to Golden Retrievers, we can tailor a [preventive health](#) plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Golden Retrievers to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Golden Retrievers. This information helps you and your Vida Veterinary Care team together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the article, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Golden looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

General Health Information for your Golden Retriever

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Golden is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't **prevent or treat dental disease**, your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Golden's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.



Infections

Golden Retrievers are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through [vaccination](#), which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

[Obesity](#) can be a significant health problem in Golden Retrievers. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of [worms](#) and bugs can invade your Golden's body, inside and out. Everything from [fleas and ticks](#) to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, [heartworms](#), and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Golden is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. [Spaying or neutering](#) decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for Golden Retrievers

Cancer

[Cancer](#) is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Golden will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his [golden years](#). Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

- Hemangiosarcoma is a type of bleeding tumor that affects Golden Retrievers at greater than average incidence. These tumors commonly form in the spleen, but can form in other organs as well. Unbeknownst to a pet owner, the tumor breaks open and internal bleeding occurs. Some tumors can be volleyball-sized or larger before signs of sickness show. We often find clues that one of these tumors

is present during senior wellness testing, so have his [blood tested](#) and an [ultrasound](#) performed at least yearly.

- Lymphoma or lymphosarcoma is a type of cancer that afflicts Golden Retrievers more than other breeds. This disease makes the body form abnormal lymphocytes, which are a type of white blood cell. Because white blood cells can be found throughout the body, this cancer can show up almost anywhere. Lymphoma is a very treatable form of cancer with an excellent success rate in dogs receiving chemotherapy. Luckily, lymphoma is one of the few types of cancer that can often be found with a blood test, so we may recommend a complete blood count twice yearly. Watch for swollen glands (ask us, we'll show you where to look), weight loss, or labored breathing at home and be sure to call us if you notice any unusual symptoms.
- Mast cell tumors are a particularly nasty type of skin cancer found more often in Golden Retrievers than other breeds. The sooner these tumors are surgically removed, the better. Unfortunately, mast cell tumors often look very similar to other kinds of skin lumps and lesions, many of which are not harmful. Therefore, all suspicious lumps should be tested and surgically removed as soon as possible. Many cancers are cured by [surgical removal](#), so early detection is critical.

Bloat

Gastric dilatation volvulus, also known as GDV or bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests. This means your Golden is more at risk than other breeds. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. The twisting cuts off the blood supply to the stomach and sometimes to the spleen. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as half an hour. Your dog may retch or heave (but little or nothing comes up), act restless, have an enlarged abdomen, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). Preventive surgery in which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it is unlikely to twist is an option. If you see symptoms, take your pet to an [emergency](#) hospital immediately!

Bone and Joint Problems

A number of different musculoskeletal problems have been reported in Golden Retrievers. While it may seem overwhelming, each condition can be diagnosed and treated to prevent undue pain and suffering. With diligent observation at home and knowledge about the diseases that may affect your friend's bones, joints, or muscles, you will be able to take great care of him throughout his life.

- Both hips and elbows are at risk for dysplasia, an inherited disease that causes the joints to develop improperly and results in arthritis. Stiffness in your Golden's elbows or hips may become a problem for him, especially as he matures. You may notice that he begins to show lameness in his legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to minimize discomfort and pain. We'll take [X-rays](#) of your dog's bones to identify issues as early as possible. Surgery is also sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue [pain](#) and suffering!

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Golden Retrievers can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs of concern.

- Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Golden Retrievers. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs

adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.

- Glaucoma, an eye condition that affects Golden Retrievers and people too, is an extremely painful disease that rapidly leads to blindness if left untreated. Symptoms include squinting, watery eyes, bluing of the cornea (the clear front part of the eye), and redness in the whites of the eyes. Pain is rarely noticed by pet owners though it is frequently there and can be severe. People who have certain types of glaucoma often report it feels like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick! Yikes! In advanced cases, the eye may look enlarged or swollen like it's bulging. We'll perform an annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and start treatment as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms, don't wait to call us, go to an [emergency](#) clinic!
- Distichiasis is a condition caused by extra hairs that grow inside of the eyelid and rub on the surface of the eye. This is one of the most commonly inherited diseases in dogs, and your Golden is more likely than other dogs to develop this painful condition. If untreated, these abnormal hairs can cause corneal ulcers and chronic eye pain. Several treatment options are available, and the prognosis is good once the hairs have been permanently removed.



Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy “atopy”, and Goldens often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

- Allergies, swimming, overgrowth of hair in the ear canals, and accumulation of earwax can all predispose your dog to ear infections, which are painful and annoying. Goldens are very often afflicted by allergies, which can cause itching and inflammation in the ears and

elsewhere. The earlier we diagnose and treat these ailments, the less discomfort and pain your pet will suffer. Be sure to call us if you notice him scratching or shaking his head, a foul odor from the ears, or if his ears seem painful to the touch. By monitoring for ear infections and treating them early, we also reduce the likelihood of eardrum damage that can lead to deafness. Most ear infections tend to recur until we work together to control the underlying cause.

Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Golden Retrievers are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us at [\(720\) 738-6234](tel:7207386234) or call an emergency hospital.

Heart Disease

Some Golden Retrievers inherit a [heart condition](#) known as aortic stenosis. This disease causes a partial obstruction to the blood flow leaving the heart, which means the heart must work harder to pump enough blood to the body. If the condition is severe, your dog may faint or seem to run out of energy during exercise. He may also have difficulty breathing, cough frequently, or have stunted growth. We'll test for this disease if your pet has any of these symptoms and discuss treatment options with you if the condition is indicated.

- Golden Retrievers are also especially prone to a life-threatening heart condition known as dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, in which the heart becomes so large, thin, and weak that it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. As this problem advances, your pet may act weak or tired, faint or collapse, breathe in a labored way, or cough. We'll conduct a yearly electrical heart screening (ECG) and/or an echocardiogram to look for abnormal heart rhythms as early as one year of age. If indicated, treatment includes medication and dietary supplementation.

Diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is a fairly common disease in dogs. Any breed can be affected, but Goldens have an above average incidence. Dogs with diabetes are unable to regulate the metabolism of sugars in their bodies and require daily insulin injections. Diabetes is a serious condition and one that is important to diagnose and treat as early as possible. Symptoms include increased eating, drinking, and urination, along with weight loss. If he shows signs, we will conduct [lab tests](#) to determine if he has this condition and discuss treatment options with you. Treatment requires a serious commitment of time and resources. Well-regulated diabetic dogs today have the same life expectancy as other canines.

Liver Problems

Your Golden is more likely than other dogs to have a liver disorder called portosystemic shunt (PSS). Some of the blood supply that should go to the liver goes around it instead, depriving the liver of the blood flow it needs to grow and function properly. If your friend has PSS, his liver cannot remove toxins from his bloodstream effectively. To check for this problem, we'll conduct a liver function test in addition to a standard pre-anesthetic panel every time he undergoes anesthesia. If he develops symptoms such as stunted growth or seizures, we'll test his blood and possibly conduct an ultrasound scan of his liver. Surgery may be needed, but in some cases, we can treat with a special diet and medication.

Bleeding Disorders

Your Golden Retriever is prone to a bleeding disorder called hemophilia. We'll conduct diagnostic testing to assess his blood clotting time before we perform surgery. This is an important test as we may not otherwise know whether your pet has hemophilia until severe bleeding occurs during surgery or after a serious injury.

Thyroid Problems

Goldens are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, fearfulness, aggression, and other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood test annually to screen for this disease. Treatment is usually as simple as replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

Taking Care of Your Golden Retriever at Home

What to Know About Doberman Pinschers

Medically Reviewed by Vanesa Farmer, DVM on April 08, 2022 Written by [Jeffrey Weishaupt](#)

General Characteristics of Doberman Pinschers

Are Dobermans Good Pets?

Are Dobermans Prone to Health Issues?

Do Dobermans Require Grooming?

7 min read



Doberman Pinschers are strong, smart and brave and commonly used as guard dogs.

Doberman Pinschers are a new canine breed known for their bravery, friendliness, and [smartness](#). A German tax collector named Louis Doberman bred Dobermans in the late 1800s and used them for his protection. Dobies can be the best guard dogs with proper training.

Dobies are intelligent and have great stamina. They are an excellent addition to your family and friends circle. This dog breed is healthy but can be prone to several health conditions over time.

The average lifespan of a Doberman Pinscher is 13 years.

General Characteristics of Doberman Pinschers

Dobermans are noble companions with a strong, muscular build. Doberman Pinscher size and weight are

about 26 to 28 inches in height and 75 to 100 pounds for males and 24 to 26 inches and 60 to 90 pounds for females.

Their body shape is sleek, and their coats are blue, black, fawn, or red with significant rust marks.

A well-trained Doberman is put on patrol to scare away any suspicious person. They are considered a royal canine breed due to their athletic and confident movement style.

Are Dobermans Good Pets?

Yes, Dobermans make excellent pets. They are friendly and protective.

Some other information of Doberman Pinschers shows that they are:

- Obedient and loyal
- Energetic
- Playful
- Affectionate
- Excellent family dogs

- Easily trainable
- Great guard dogs
- Strong and athletic

That said, a few Doberman Pinschers personality traits to look for include:

- Aggressiveness due to lack of [socialization](#)
- Need for frequent exercise and outdoor activities
- High chances to get bored or experiencing separation anxiety
- Overprotectiveness of family
- Slow maturity

Are Dobermans Prone to Health Issues?

Living with a dog requires you to be vigilant and responsible. These furry pets depend on their owners for food, shelter, and love. Dobermans are usually healthy, but they may have certain health issues as they age.

Some Doberman Pinscher health conditions are:

Von Willebrand Disease

This is a common, congenital bleeding disorder in humans and dogs. A deficiency in Von Willebrand factor (vWF) causes this condition. vWF is a special protein that helps platelets stay together and form clots. Von Willebrand disease affects at least 30 different dog breeds. Doberman Pinschers have the highest chances of having vWD abnormalities.

RELATED:

[How Combination Therapy Can Treat Follicular Lymphoma](#)

Cardiac Diseases

Dobermans have a high risk of having a health condition called dilated cardiomyopathy (DCM). This disease enlarges and weakens the dog's heart, making it unable to pump blood to and from the heart. This can cause weakness, exhaustion, and coughing in your pet. They may also collapse frequently.

Dental Disease

Dental diseases affect the majority of dogs. These diseases begin with tartar development on the teeth that transforms into gum or root infections later in the dogs' lives.

Neurological Disease

Wobbler disease or wobbler syndrome is a genetically-inherited neurological condition that leads to drunken gait in animals. It is caused when the vertebrae in the Doberman's neck narrow down, pinching the spinal cord and surrounding nerves.

The pinched nerves fail to send signals to the brain. When this happens, the pet may have unstable hind legs that make them stumble and collapse.

Liver Conditions

Doberman Pinschers can develop specific liver disorders, such as copper hepatopathy. This condition leads to high levels of copper buildup in the dog's liver, leading to the organ's failure if left untreated.

Dogs with copper hepatopathy may show prominent signs of jaundice, like yellow skin, eyes, and gums, from the ages of two to four.

Eye Issues

Your dog needs proper eye functioning to carry out their daily activities usually. Dobermans can inherit or develop several eye conditions, which are painful and may lead to blindness if left untreated.

Kidney Diseases

Many Doberman Pinschers can inherit Glomerulonephritis, a kidney disease that gradually damages the dog's kidneys. It may lead to their failure at an early stage. The damaged kidneys leak protein from the pet's body, which your vet can use to diagnose easily.

Thyroid Problems

[Hypothyroidism](#) is a common thyroid problem in Dobermans that is caused when the pet's body can't produce enough thyroid hormone. The common

symptoms of this condition include hair loss, weight gain, dry skin and coat, fearfulness, and aggression.

Skin Conditions

Your Doberman can also have several skin conditions, including Malassezia dermatitis, which is caused by yeast. It makes the dog's ears itchy and red and may result in a brown waxy buildup that can be identified with a unique odor. This condition also causes greasiness and hairless areas on the neck and throat of the dog.

RELATED:

[What Are the Possible Site Effects of CAR T?](#)

Another common Doberman skin condition is seborrhea. It causes dryness, flakiness, or oiliness on the dog's skin. You'll find your pet itching their skin more often. It's better to consult your vet as soon as possible to reduce the chances of allergies.

Pemphigus foliaceus is also a common disease in Doberman Pinschers. It results in hair loss and crusts formation on the dog's nose or inside their ears. Some

Dobermans also have the signs of this skin condition on their toenails and footpads. These skin crusts can be worsened by exposure to sunlight.

Bloat

Dobermans with narrow chests can have gastric dilatation-volvulus (GDV) or bloat. A bloating dog's stomach gets filled with gas and twists on itself. This twisting restricts the blood supply to the spleen and stomach.

Bloated dogs heave, act uncomfortable, lie down more often, and have an enlarged tummy. If left untreated, this condition can lead to death, sometimes in only 30 minutes.

Cancer

Senior dogs can develop cancer that may lead to their death. A Doberman Pinscher usually lives longer than other dog breeds, so they have higher chances of having cancer. Some cancers can be treated with surgery, while others can be removed through chemotherapy.

Diabetes

Many dog breeds have diabetes mellitus, but Dobies can have more chances of this disease. Dogs with diabetes struggle to balance the sugar metabolism in their bodies and need daily insulin doses. The common symptoms of diabetes include excessive drinking, eating, urination, and visible weight loss.

This is a severe Doberman Pinscher health condition that needs to be diagnosed and treated early.

Obesity

[Overeating](#) can lead to serious health issues in your dogs, including joint problems, back pain, cardiac conditions, and digestive disorders.

Infections

Dobermans are vulnerable to many bacterial and viral infections, such as rabies, distemper, and parvo.

Parasites

Several worms, bugs, fleas, ear mites, and ticks can cause infections in your Dobie's body from the inside out. Hookworms, whipworms, heartworms, and roundworms from unclean water or contaminated soil can enter your dog's system. These parasites can also transfer to humans or may lead to death in pets.

Spay or Neuter

Spaying or neutering refers to removing the ovaries and uterus of female Dobermans and testicles of males. This process minimizes the risks of specific cancer types and unwanted pregnancies. [Spaying or neutering](#) also helps doctors to identify any potential diseases in your dog during the surgery.

RELATED:

[How Combination Therapy Can Treat Follicular Lymphoma](#)

Do Dobermans Require Grooming?

You can ensure your Doberman Pinscher receives proper care through bathing sessions. It is good, though, to

maintain their grooming routine to keep them in an optimal condition at all times.

Using a brush with short and soft bristles on your Doberman will keep their coat shiny and lustrous. Don't bathe them frequently. Remember to trim their nails once or twice a month and brush their teeth daily.

How Smart Are Doberman Pinschers?

Doberman Pinschers are intelligent and energetic dogs who need playing sessions and [exercise](#) to stay busy. You can take your pet on hikes and daily walks and let them run in a fenced park to maintain their optimal physical health.

This dog breed learns easily and gives quick responses to training and exercises. You can engage them in several training sessions, like obedience, agility, and tracking exercises, to strengthen their mind and body.

Remember that Dobermans are not always friendly. They can be quite aggressive and unmanageable if you don't

focus on their behavioral training. Start with socialization and teach your puppy about how to behave in public.

It's recommended to start your Doberman's training from the early stage and keep them inside the home. The dog is raised to be a friendly, noble, and well-mannered companion.

How Do You Feed a Doberman Pinscher?

Dobermans need quality dog food throughout their lifespan to stay strong and protective. It's essential to contact your vet or dog's breeder to determine the appropriate [nutritional diet](#) for their age.

Giving so many treats to your dogs can lead to obesity, so try to reduce their use in the training sessions. You can also give your dog safe human foods if your vet suggests so. Provide your Dobie with lots of clean and fresh water all the time.

A vet or nutritionist can better guide you about your Doberman Pinscher diet, according to its weight.

Doberman Pinschers Care Routine

Build a Doberman Pinscher care routine to help your pet live longer, healthier, and happier.

Try to:

- Monitor your pet's activities as you do with your child. Ensure to keep all the doors locked when you're not around to keep them away from troubles.
- Brush their coat weekly and their teeth twice a week.
- Clean their ears carefully.
- Keep them active with exercises, playing, and [training sessions](#).
- Make your dog's diet appropriate for their age.



Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Golden Retrievers. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Golden live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- She needs a thorough brushing at least weekly most of the year. Twice a year she blows her coat and loses crazy amounts of hair; daily brushing is recommended during this time.
- Golden Retrievers generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!
- Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- She's a smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.
- She excels at dog sports like flyball, agility, dock diving, and obedience events.
- She has a passion for water, and swimming is a perfect form of exercise for this water retriever.
- Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
- Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Golden Retriever needs help.

Office Calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Change in appetite or water consumption
- Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- Increased hunger and thirst, weight loss
- Slow or stunted growth; sometimes seizures after eating
- Dull coat, hair loss; sluggish, weight gain

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- Dry heaving or a large, tight, painful abdomen
- Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- Fainting, weakness, cough, or shortness of breath during exercise
- Fainting, collapse; breathing issues, coughs when resting
- Bruises easily or bleeds a lot even from small wounds

SHETLAND SHEEPDOG

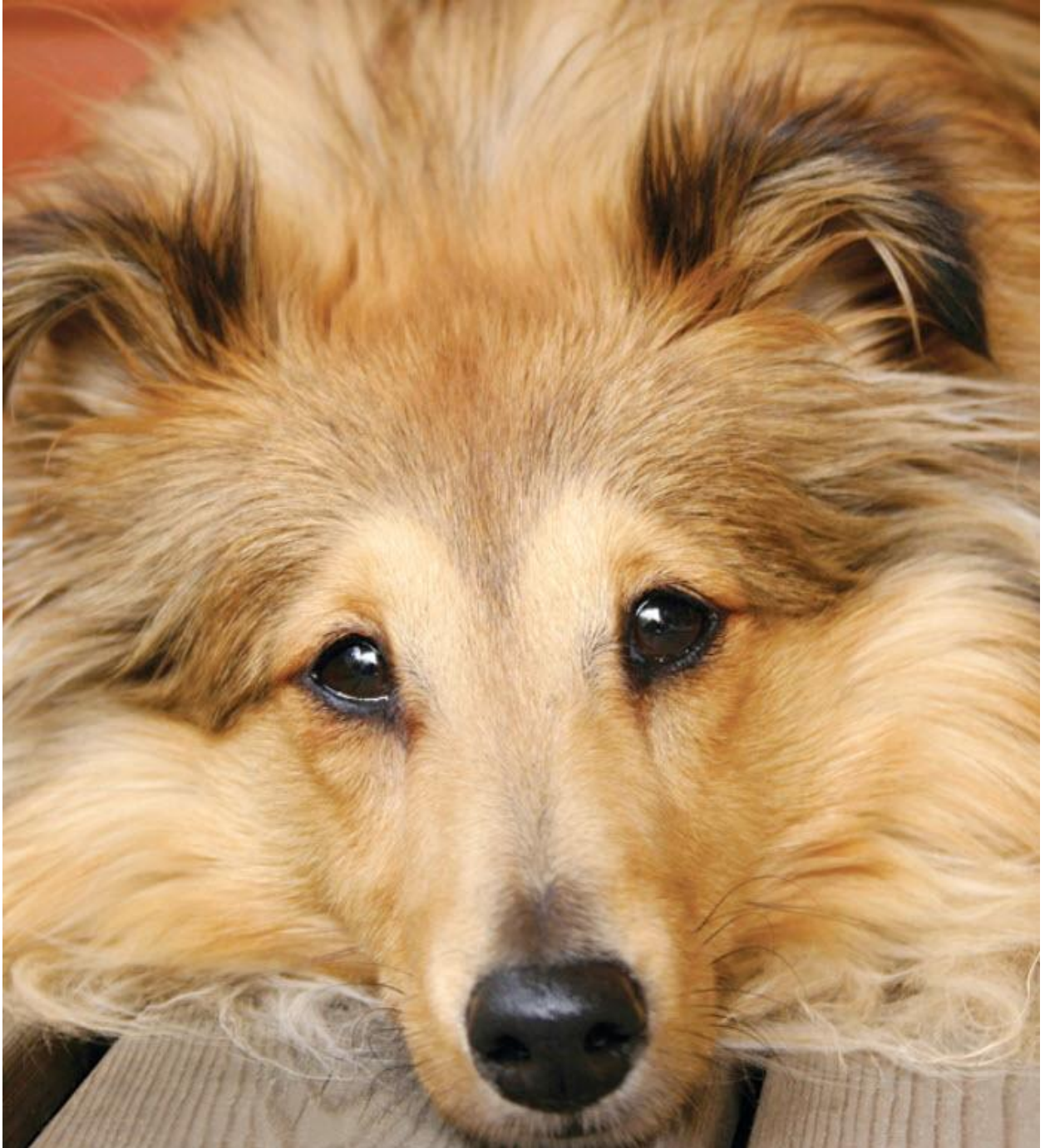
The Sweet Sheltie

Chances are that you chose to share your home with a Shetland Sheepdog because you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Loyal and loving companion
- Good with kids and other pets
- Vigilant watchdog with a ready bark
- Sweet, gentle, and sensitive
- Above-average intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Agile, sturdy, and muscular

Just be sure to watch out for:

- Suspicious of strangers
- Easily bored if not given something to do, which may lead to barking and chewing
- Strong herding instinct can lead to chasing cars and small animals
- Needs daily exercise
- Prone to quite a few health problems
- Prone to separation anxiety



There's a lot going on behind those sparkling almond eyes—intuitive and bright, Shelties make great family pets!

Shetland Sheepdogs originated in Scotland and are descendants of the Collie. Shelties have held many jobs including herding, protecting, and

tracking. They are well known for their intelligence and their seemingly human understanding of their companions. Shelties thrive in competition and love to be useful. The Sheltie's double coat requires a considerable amount of grooming, but her beauty is worth the care.

Your Shetland Sheepdog's Health

We know that because you care so much about your [dog](#), you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Sheltie. By knowing about health concerns specific to Shetland Sheepdogs, we can tailor a [preventive health](#) plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Shetland Sheepdogs to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us at Vida Veterinary Care if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Shetland Sheepdogs. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the article, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Sheltie looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

General Health Information for your Shetland Sheepdog

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Shetland Sheepdog is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her [teeth](#). Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't [prevent or treat dental disease](#), your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Sheltie's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.



Infections

Shetland Sheepdogs are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through [vaccination](#), which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity can be a significant health problem in Shetland Sheepdogs. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal [food](#) when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can “love her to death” with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of [worms](#) and bugs can invade your Sheltie's body, inside and out. Everything from [fleas and ticks](#) to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, [heartworms](#), and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Sheltie is to have her [spayed \(neutered for males\)](#). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of [cancers](#) and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip [X-rays](#) or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for Shetland Sheepdogs



Multidrug Resistance

Multidrug resistance is a genetic defect in a gene called MDR1. If your Shetland Sheepdog has this mutation, it can affect the way his body processes different drugs, including substances commonly used to treat parasites, diarrhea, and even cancer. For years, veterinarians simply avoided using ivermectin in herding breeds, but now there is a DNA test that can specifically identify dogs who are at risk for side effects from certain medications. Testing your pet early in life can prevent drug-related toxicity

Heart Disease

Shelties are susceptible to a [condition](#) called patent ductus arteriosus, or PDA, in which a small vessel that carries blood between two parts of the heart does not close as it should shortly after birth. This results in too much

blood being carried to the lungs, causing fluid build-up and strain on the heart. Outward signs may be mild or severe, including coughing, fatigue during exercise, weight loss, shortness of breath, and weakness in the hind limbs. We listen for a specific type of heart murmur to diagnose this problem during your pet's examinations. If your pal has this condition, we may recommend surgery to close the problematic vessel.

Bleeding Disorders

There are several types of inherited bleeding disorders that occur in dogs. They range in severity from very mild to very severe. Many times a pet seems normal until a serious injury occurs or surgery is performed, and then severe bleeding can result. Shelties are particularly prone to some relatively rare diseases of the blood.

- Hemolytic anemia and thrombocytopenia occur when the immune system goes haywire and starts attacking the pet's own red blood cells or platelets. If the immune system destroys red blood cells, your dog quickly becomes anemic, weak, and lethargic. His gums will look whitish or yellow instead of a normal bright pink color. If the immune system destroys platelets, his blood won't clot properly and he'll have bruises or abnormal bleeding. We'll perform [diagnostic testing](#) for blood clotting to check for these problems before we perform any surgeries. To slow or stop the immune system's destruction of cells, we'll prescribe steroids and other immune-suppressive drugs. Sometimes an emergency transfusion of red blood cells or platelets is needed.
- Von Willebrand's disease is a blood clotting disorder frequently found in Shetland Sheepdogs. We'll conduct diagnostic testing for blood clotting times or a specific DNA blood test for Von Willebrand's disease and other similar disorders to check for this problem before we perform surgery.

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Shetland Sheepdogs can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Shelties. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.
- Distichiasis is a condition caused by extra hairs that grow inside of the eyelid and rub on the surface of the eye. This is one of the most commonly inherited diseases in dogs, and your Sheltie is more likely than other dogs to develop this painful condition. If untreated, these abnormal hairs can cause corneal ulcers and chronic eye pain. Several treatment options are available, and the prognosis is good once the hairs have been permanently removed.
- Collie eye anomaly is a genetically linked disease that causes abnormal development of the eyes in Shetland Sheepdogs. In severe cases, the disease can lead to blindness. Unfortunately, there is no treatment. It is important to give your pet a thorough eye examination prior to breeding.

Lupus

Systemic lupus erythematosus is a fairly rare autoimmune disease in which the dog's immune system attacks itself. This disorder results in chronic inflammation of the skin, joints, and internal organs, sometimes even leading to death in severe cases. Shelties are more commonly affected than other breeds. Symptoms usually begin between three to seven years of age. There is no cure for lupus, but medications can help manage symptoms. Sunlight can cause flare-ups, so avoiding sunlight exposure and using a dog-safe sunscreen on sensitive parts like ears and noses can help.

Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Shetland Sheepdogs are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us or an [emergency](#) hospital.

Bone and Joint Problems

A number of different musculoskeletal problems have been reported in Shetland Sheepdogs. While it may seem overwhelming, each condition can be diagnosed and treated to prevent undue pain and suffering. With diligent observation at home and knowledge about the diseases that may affect your friend's bones, joints, or muscles, you will be able to take great care of him throughout his life.

- Both hips and elbows are at risk for dysplasia, an inherited disease that causes the joints to develop improperly and results in arthritis. Stiffness in your Sheltie's elbows or hips may become a problem for him, especially as he matures. You may notice that he begins to show lameness in his legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to minimize discomfort and pain. We'll take [X-rays](#) of your dog's bones to identify issues as early as possible. Surgery is also sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may

develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering!

- Sometimes your Sheltie's kneecap (patella) may slip out of place. This is called patellar luxation. You might notice that your pet, while running, suddenly picks up a back leg or skips and hops for a few strides. He might then kick his leg out sideways to pop the kneecap back in place. These are common signs of patellar luxation. If the problem is mild and involves only one leg, your friend may not require much treatment beyond arthritis medication. When symptoms are severe, [surgery](#) may be needed to realign the kneecap to keep it from luxating further.



Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy

“atopy”, and Shelties often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

Dermatomyositis

Dermatomyositis is an inflammatory condition of the skin and muscles seen in young Shetland Sheepdogs. It appears to be caused by a defect in the immune system passed genetically as an autosomal dominant trait, meaning that if one parent is affected, all the puppies will be susceptible to the disorder, but some may be affected more than others. Medications can help alleviate symptoms, but affected dogs should not be used for breeding.

Cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Sheltie, however, is a bit more prone to certain kinds of cancer that can appear at a younger age. Many cancers are cured by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy, but for all types, early detection is critical! We'll do periodic blood tests and look for lumps and bumps on your pet at each exam.

Thyroid Problems

Shelties are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, fearfulness, aggression, and other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood test annually to screen for this disease. Treatment is usually as simple as replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

Kidney Disorder

Fanconi syndrome is a disorder of the kidneys that allows vital blood nutrients to escape into the urine. Because these nutrients are so important, affected Shelties can experience excessive urination and thirst, weight loss, and weakness due to abnormal electrolyte levels. Symptoms usually appear between two and six years of age. The severity and course of the disease vary from dog to dog; some pets remain stable for years while others may develop fatal kidney failure. Routine urine screening can help to diagnose Fanconi syndrome in its early stages, and prompt treatment can greatly [extend both your pet's lifespan and his quality of life](#).

Hemorrhagic Gastroenteritis

Most commonly seen in small and toy breeds like your Sheltie, hemorrhagic gastroenteritis, or HGE, is a serious and sometimes fatal disease in dogs that is characterized by bloody diarrhea, vomiting, and severe dehydration. Extensive treatment may be necessary for dogs suffering from hemorrhagic gastroenteritis, and some dogs may not survive the disease, particularly if they are not promptly treated. There are many causes of gastrointestinal disease in dogs, but any dog with these symptoms should be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

Taking Care of Your Shetland Sheepdog at Home



Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Shelties. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Sheltie live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- Brush her coat as needed, at least weekly.
- Shetland Sheepdogs often have serious problems with their teeth, so you'll need to brush them at least three times a week!
- Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- She is well suited to apartment life as long as she is given a daily walk and frequent play sessions.
- She is an athletic dog that excels at dog sports like agility, obedience, and herding.
- She has a strong chase instinct, so she needs to be leash walked and a fenced yard is a must.
- Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
- Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Shetland Sheepdog needs help.

Office Calls

Give us a call at [\(720\) 738-6234](tel:7207386234) for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Change in appetite or water consumption
- Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- Dull coat, hair loss; sluggish, weight gain
- Lumps or bumps – regardless of size

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- Fatigue during exercise, coughing, or shortness of breath
- Gums that are a color other than bright pink
- Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- Leg stiffness; reluctance to rise, sit, use stairs, run, or jump; “bunny hopping”

LABRADOR RETRIEVER

That Loveable Lab

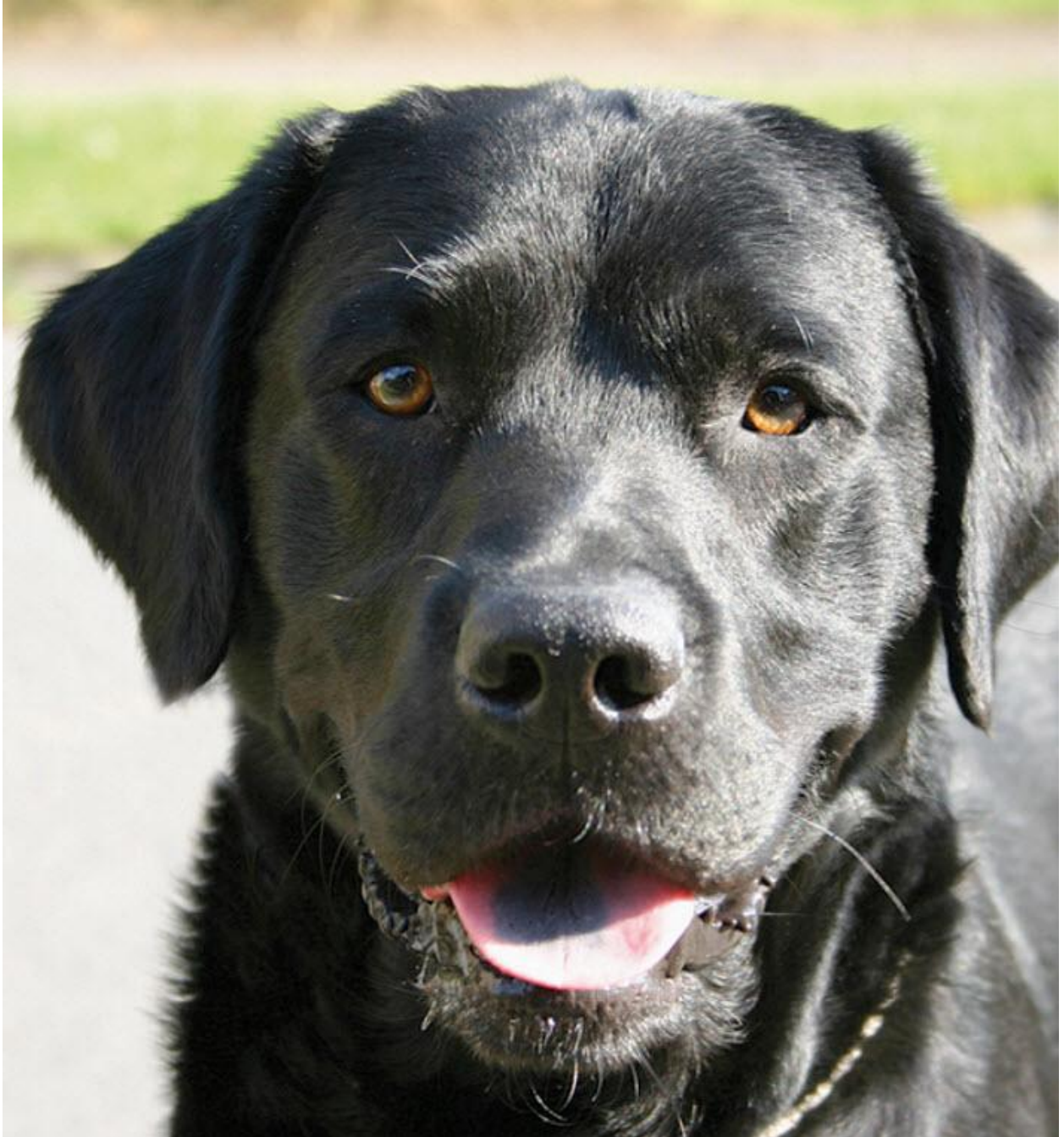
If you don't have a Labrador Retriever, chances are you know one! These dogs are so popular for some great reasons:

- Bouncy, cheerful, loyal, and enthusiastic
- Good with kids and other pets

- Above-average intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Loves to play games, especially fetch
- People-oriented and eager to please
- Even temper and gentle disposition

However, no dog is perfect! You may also see these traits:

- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Needs a lot of exercise
- Is a bit “mouthy”—likes to carry and chew things
- Exhibits signs of separation anxiety if left alone too much
- Easily bored if not given something to do, which leads to barking and chewing
- Sensitive, matures slowly



Loyal and lively, these water-loving dogs make exceptional family members and hunting partners.

Labs originated in Newfoundland in the 1800s and were bred from St. John's water dogs. They were valued by fisherman for their trainability, trustworthiness, and work ethic. Fulfilling their retriever name, they would

dive into icy cold waters to help pull in fishing nets and occasionally catch stray fish that had escaped. Today the Labrador comes in two varieties: the American (tall and lanky) or English (short and stocky). Both American and English ancestries present all three color versions—black, blonde, and brown. When given plenty of vigorous exercise and attention, these sweethearts are gentle and well-behaved in the home. All you need is a ball to throw and your Lab will love you for life! The Labrador Retriever is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 11-13 years.

Your Labrador Retriever's Health

We know that because you care so much about your [dog](#), you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Labrador. By knowing about health concerns specific to Labrador Retrievers, we can tailor a [preventive health](#) plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Labrador Retrievers to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Labrador Retrievers. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the article, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Lab looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

General Health Information for your Labrador Retriever

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Lab is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't **prevent or treat dental disease**, your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Lab's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.



Infections

Labrador Retrievers are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through [vaccination](#), which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity can be a significant health problem in Labrador Retrievers. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal [food](#) when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of [worms](#) and bugs can invade your Lab's body, inside and out. Everything from [fleas and ticks](#) to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, [heartworms](#), and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Labrador is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. [Spaying or neutering](#) decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this [surgery](#) also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.

Genetic Predispositions for Labrador Retrievers



Bloat

Gastric dilatation volvulus, also known as GDV or bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests. This means your Labrador is more at risk than other breeds. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. The twisting cuts off the blood supply to the stomach and sometimes to the spleen. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as half an hour. Your dog may retch or heave (but little or nothing comes up), act restless, have an enlarged abdomen, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). Preventive surgery in which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it is unlikely to twist is an option. If you see symptoms, take your pet to an [emergency](#) hospital immediately!

Liver Problems

Your Lab is more likely than other dogs to have a liver disorder called portosystemic shunt (PSS). Some of the blood supply that should go to the liver goes around it instead, depriving the liver of the blood flow it needs to grow and function properly. If your friend has PSS, his liver cannot remove toxins from his bloodstream effectively. To check for this problem, we'll conduct a [liver function test](#) in addition to a standard pre-anesthetic panel every time he undergoes anesthesia. If he develops symptoms such as stunted growth or seizures, we'll test his blood and possibly conduct an ultrasound scan of his liver. Surgery may be needed, but in some cases, we can treat with a special diet and medication.

- Your Labrador Retriever is prone to a chronic liver disease called hepatitis that may develop around middle age. Hepatitis is usually diagnosed through blood testing or liver biopsy, and can be treated with medication and special diets. Signs of liver disease do not usually occur until most of the liver is already damaged or destroyed, so early detection and intervention through routine blood screening is essential for early treatment.

Bleeding Disorders

Your Labrador Retriever is prone to a bleeding disorder called hemophilia. We'll conduct diagnostic testing to assess his blood clotting time before we perform surgery. This is an important test as we may not otherwise know whether your pet has hemophilia until severe bleeding occurs during surgery or after a serious injury.

Hemolytic Anemia and Thrombocytopenia

Labradors are particularly prone to some relatively rare diseases of the blood that occur when the immune system goes haywire and starts attacking the pet's own red blood cells or platelets. If the immune system destroys red blood cells, your dog quickly becomes anemic, weak, and lethargic. His gums will look whitish or yellow instead of a normal bright

pink color. If the immune system destroys platelets, his blood won't clot properly and he'll have bruises or abnormal bleeding. We'll perform diagnostic testing for blood clotting to check for these problems before we perform any surgeries. To slow or stop the immune system's destruction of cells, we'll prescribe steroids and other immune-suppressive drugs. Sometimes an emergency transfusion of red blood cells or platelets is needed.

Bone and Joint Problems

A number of different musculoskeletal problems have been reported in Labrador Retrievers. While it may seem overwhelming, each condition can be diagnosed and treated to prevent undue pain and suffering. With diligent observation at home and knowledge about the diseases that may affect your friend's bones, joints, or muscles, you will be able to take great care of him throughout his life.

- Both hips and elbows are at risk for dysplasia, an inherited disease that causes the joints to develop improperly and results in arthritis. Stiffness in your Labrador's elbows or hips may become a problem for him, especially as he matures. You may notice that he begins to show lameness in his legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to minimize discomfort and pain. We'll take [X-rays](#) of your dog's bones to identify issues as early as possible. Surgery is also sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering!
- The cranial cruciate ligament is one of four tough bands of tissue that hold each knee together. A torn cranial cruciate ligament is a common injury in active dogs, including your Lab. Usually, surgical correction can stabilize the knee and help prevent crippling arthritis. Physical therapy and multimodal pain management are necessary for the best outcomes. Keeping him at the right weight, feeding a

high-quality diet, and avoiding too much twisting of the knees (like when playing Frisbee) are key in avoiding these painful injuries.

- When Labrador [puppies](#) are allowed to grow too quickly, the cartilage in their joints may not attach to the bones properly. This problem is known as osteochondritis dissecans, or OCD. If this occurs, surgery may be required to fix the problem. Our recommended growth rate for Labrador Retriever puppies is no more than four pounds per week. To maintain this rate, don't overfeed him and don't supplement with additional calcium. [Feed a large-breed puppy diet rather than an adult or regular puppy diet](#). And weigh your puppy every three to four weeks to make sure he's on track.

Neurological Disease

A genetically linked neurological condition, known as wobbler disease or wobbler syndrome, causes a wobbly, drunken gait in affected pets. Wobbler disease is the result of a narrowing of the vertebrae in the neck that pinches the spinal cord and associated nerves. When pinched, the nerves do not send signals to the brain as they should causing the pet to be unable to feel his feet. The first signs you will often notice with wobbler disease are unstable hind legs, stumbling, and sometimes falling. Treatment options include medications, neck braces, rehabilitation exercise programs, and surgery.



Diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is a fairly common disease in dogs. Any breed can be affected, but Labs have an above average incidence. Dogs with diabetes are unable to regulate the metabolism of sugars in their bodies and require daily insulin injections. Diabetes is a serious condition and one that is important to diagnose and treat as early as possible. Symptoms include increased eating, drinking, and urination, along with weight loss. If he shows signs, we will conduct lab tests to determine if he has this condition and discuss treatment options with you. Treatment requires a serious commitment of time and resources. Well-regulated diabetic dogs today have the same life expectancy as other canines.

Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy “atopy”, and Labradors often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and

ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

Bleeding Tumor

Hemangiosarcoma is a type of bleeding tumor that affects Labrador Retrievers at greater than average incidence. These tumors commonly form in the spleen, but can form in other organs as well. Unbeknownst to a pet owner, the tumor breaks open and internal bleeding occurs. Some tumors can be volleyball-sized or larger before signs of sickness show. We often find clues that one of these tumors is present during senior wellness testing, so have his blood tested and an ultrasound performed at least yearly.

Lymphoma

Lymphoma or lymphosarcoma is a type of [cancer](#) that afflicts Labrador Retrievers more than other breeds. This disease makes the body form abnormal lymphocytes, which are a type of white blood cell. Because white blood cells can be found throughout the body, this cancer can show up almost anywhere. Lymphoma is a very treatable form of cancer with an excellent success rate in dogs receiving chemotherapy. Luckily, lymphoma is one of the few types of cancer that can often be found with a blood test, so we may recommend a complete blood count twice yearly. Watch for swollen glands (ask us, we'll show you where to look), weight loss, or labored breathing at home and be sure to call us if you notice any unusual symptoms.

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Labrador Retrievers can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely [painful](#)! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs of concern.

Hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's)

Cushing's Disease is a malfunction of the adrenal glands that causes them to produce too much steroid hormone. This is a common problem in dogs, and your Lab is more likely than other dogs to be affected. The condition usually develops slowly, and the early signs are easily missed. Symptoms include drinking and urinating more than normal, increased appetite, and reduced activity level followed later by a potbelly, thin skin, and hair loss. Treatment usually includes oral medications and requires close coordination with us to ensure correct dosing.

Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and Labrador Retrievers are commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us at [\(720\) 738-6234](#) or call an [emergency](#) hospital.

Heart Disease

Some breeds like your Labrador can be born with a variety of [heart defects](#). Most affect the structure of the heart's dividing wall or the vessels of the heart. Defects can also cause problems with heart valve function or the electrical signals that control the heartbeat. Because of the significant risk of heart disease in this breed, we'll pay special attention to his heart during each examination. Special testing will be recommended if we hear a heart murmur or if you notice any unusual symptoms such as tiring easily, coughing, a swollen belly, or fainting.

Exercise Induced Collapse

Exercise induced collapse, or EIC, is just what it sounds like – a young, apparently healthy Labrador collapses to the ground suddenly while exercising. After a few minutes, the weakness passes and he is able to get up again. Dogs affected with EIC cannot run or exert themselves for long periods of time, especially not in hot weather, so a day of hunting or strenuous hiking is not a good idea for these pets. Heat stroke can also occur in conjunction with EIC. Limiting your pet's exercise is the only treatment for EIC and pet parents should be vigilant to avoid overheating. Genetic testing can be done to diagnose this disease and to screen dogs before breeding.

Muscle Disease

Labrador Retrievers may develop a disease of the muscles called myopathy between three and seven months of age. Physical signs of myopathy include bunny hopping, loss of muscle tone in the limbs, a stiff gait, and carrying the head low. If we suspect that your dog has this disease, we'll conduct tests to be sure. Typically, affected pets are treated through reduced stress and occasionally with medication as well. Most dogs with myopathy are stabilized by twelve months of age and are able to have a normal life span. While they are suitable as house companions, strenuous exercise is not recommended, so no hunting or working!

Taking Care of Your Labrador Retriever at Home



Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Labradors. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she

will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Lab live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- Brush her coat as needed, at least weekly.
- Labrador Retrievers generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!
- Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
- She's a smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.
- Always walk your Lab on a leash as she has a tendency to run off after interesting smells and people.
- She has a passion for water, and swimming is a perfect form of exercise for this water retriever.
- Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
- Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Labrador Retriever needs help.

Office Calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Change in appetite or water consumption
- Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- Swollen lymph nodes or glands, unexplained weight loss
- Drinks and urinates more, eats more; potbelly, poor haircoat
- Slow or stunted growth; sometimes seizures after eating
- Increased hunger and thirst, weight loss

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- Dry heaving or a large, tight, painful abdomen
- Bruises easily or bleeds a lot even from small wounds
- Gums that are a color other than bright pink
- Pale gums, labored breathing, weakness, or sudden collapse
- Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- Tiring easily, coughing, a swollen belly or fainting/collapse
- Collapse while exercising
- Leg stiffness; reluctance to rise, sit, use stairs, run, or jump; “bunny hopping”

