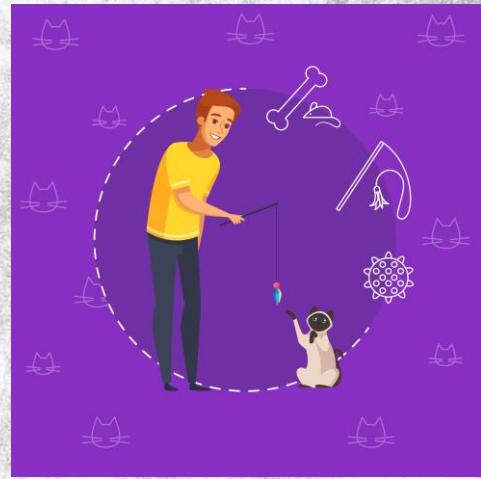


## Pet care



Bringing a new pet into your house can be as intimidating as it is exciting. Even if you already have an animal or two at home, taking care of animals often comes along with plenty of questions.

### TIPS FOR TAKING CARE OF ANIMALS

Before you bring home your pet, be sure you're ready. Here are a few considerations to think about as you prepare to bring a loved pet into your life:

- Select a pet that is suited to your home and lifestyle and avoid impulsive decisions.
- Recognize that owning a pet(s) requires an investment of time and money.
- Keep only the type and number of pets for which you can provide an appropriate and safe environment. This includes appropriate food, water, shelter, health care, and companionship.

**My Health**  
**Digest**



- Ensure your pet is properly identified (i.e., tags, microchips, or tattoos) and that their registration information in associated databases is kept up to date.
- Be knowledgeable of and adhere to local ordinances, including licensing and leash requirements.
- Provide preventive (e.g., vaccinations, parasite control) health care for the life of your pet(s).
- Socialize your pet to facilitate their well-being and the well-being of other animals and people. If needed, provide additional training.
- Provide exercise and mental stimulation appropriate to your pet(s)' age, breed, and health status.
- Include your pets in your planning for an emergency or disaster, including assembling an evacuation kit.
- Plan for the care of your pet when or if you are unable to do so.

## HOW TO TAKE CARE OF THEM

### Dogs

**Food:** Whether you're bringing home a new puppy or taking care of a well-aged companion, be sure to stock up on high-quality dog food. Puppies typically need three to four meals per day, but once your dog reaches about one year of age, one meal of day is usually enough. Fresh, clean water should always be available also.

**Environment:** It's important to maintain a safe environment. When caring for animals that will be staying outdoors, you'll need some sort of temperature control system to ensure they remain comfortable. A microchip or some sort of collar identification is a must for both indoor and outdoor dogs. Dogs need exercise to burn calories, stimulate their minds, and stay healthy and tend to help them avoid boredom:





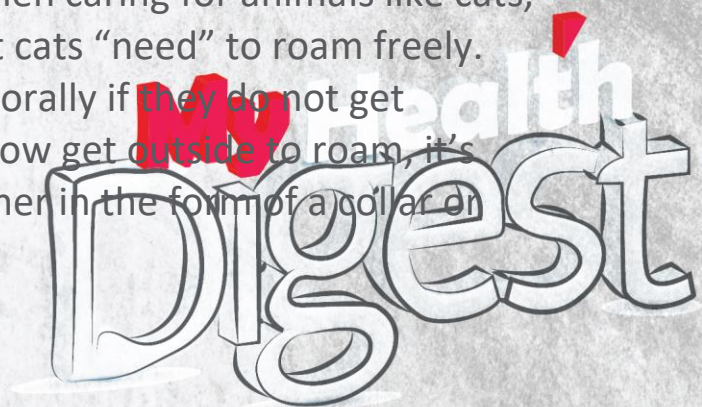
Individual exercise needs vary based on breed or breed mix, sex, age, and level of health. And make room for regular grooming. Regular grooming can help reduce shedding and identify any tick or flea issues before they become a bigger problem.

**Veterinary Care:** Puppies should have their first visit to the veterinarian when they're around three weeks old. You should expect a physical exam and testing for worms. This is also a good time to discuss vaccinations and determining when to spay or neuter. Also plan to bring your dog in for annual exams. Just like you would do for your health, be on the lookout for signs of health issues that may require immediate attention. Weight loss, changes in behavior, and lack of energy are all signs something might be wrong.

## Cats

**Food:** Whether you have a kitten or a cat, investing in high-quality food is important. How much food you give your cat will depend on the age of your animal and their current activity level. Some felines are natural grazers and can handle access to food throughout the entire day. Some are prone to overeating and need to have a feeding schedule, such as twice per day. It's important the food includes taurine, which is an essential amino acid for heart and eye health. Work with your veterinarian to determine what is best for your beloved pet. No matter the feeding schedule, make sure fresh, clean water is always available.

**Environment:** Though some pet owners allow their cats to roam the neighborhood, it's recommended that when caring for animals like cats, you keep them. There is no evidence that cats "need" to roam freely. They are not harmed physically or behaviorally if they do not get outside. However, in case they do somehow get outside to roam, it's important they have identification, whether in the form of a collar or





microchip. You'll need a litter box, cat toys, nail clippers, and a scratching post. It's also a good idea to regularly groom your cat. Many cats enjoy being brushed and regular grooming can help minimize hairballs.

**Veterinary Care:** Guidelines for cats are like those for dogs. Whether you're bringing up a kitten or adopting an older cat, be sure to visit the veterinarian soon after you bring a furry friend home to check for worms and make sure you get vaccinations in order. Also, like dogs, cats are safe to be spayed or neutered around eight weeks old. Cats should be taken in for regular check-ups at least once each year. These routine visits are meant to ensure your cat stays healthy, and they usually only take about 30 minutes.

### **Other Small Animals That Are Easy to Take Care of**

"Pocket pets" are small domestic animals such as gerbils, hamsters, ferrets, and rabbits. Many people opt to adopt a pocket pet as opposed to a dog or cat because they are easier to take care of, and they don't require as much attention as their canine and feline counterparts.

Children often want a small pet they can call their own. Pocket pets are often the perfect introduction to how to properly take care of domestic animals. However, when you're deciding on adopting or purchasing small animals that are easy to take care of you still need to take time to prepare your home for them. You may need to invest in supplies and accessories designed for your pet such as tanks or cages, terrariums, or a rabbit hutch. Many smaller animals still need plenty of space to run around in, foliage to hide beneath, shavings to burrow into and toys to play with.

Each of these species has its own special considerations, but a common theme is that their water is changed daily, they should be fed a well-





balanced food, and their cage cleaned at least weekly. For the more social species (rabbits, guinea pigs, and rats) daily handling and play is also important to their well-being, so making sure their environment is stimulating is important.

Pocket pets must also be kept safe from any possible risk. If out of their cage, your pet can get stuck behind a large appliance or inside furniture. If you let your special pet roam the home, be sure to eliminate any threats, such as electric wires, choking hazards, and large predators. Your Pocket Pet may be required to have certain vaccinations, and zoonotic diseases are a primary concern with many of these animals. Be sure to work with your local veterinarian who can take a specialized approach to caring for animals such as Pocket Pets

