

The Dog Food Project

I've seen a look in dogs' eyes, a quickly vanishing look of amazed contempt, and I am convinced that basically dogs think humans are nuts. - John Steinbeck



Feeding puppies

The most important thing about feeding puppies is that during this time of physical development the body's foundations are built for life - the formation and growth of muscles and skeleton, teeth, internal organs, immune system and the brain, along with cognitive and nerve function, all happen in a relatively short time. Nutritional mistakes made now may not always be fully reversed later on.

On the other hand, there is much we can do to strengthen and positively influence the building of this foundation during puppyhood by making the right choices.

Most importantly, steer clear of poor quality foods and harmful ingredients. Recognize that your veterinarian is not necessarily the best source of information on this topic - with all due respect to the highly trained professionals in the veterinary field - when it comes to nutrition, only very few of them are actually capable of doing anything but recommending highly advertised products made by certain well known national pet food companies. You can learn more about the quality level of these products by comparing their ingredients to the details given in the articles linked in the left-hand menu.

Another important aspect is the puppy's body size and expected adult weight. The smaller the dog, the more energy and nutrients are required per pound of body weight to keep the dog healthy. Nutrient and energy requirements do not increase in a linear fashion, meaning that a 20 lb dog does not need double the amount of food of a 10 lb dog, and neither will one-fifth of the amount necessary to feed a 100 lb dog provide sufficient nutrients.

Due to their initially rapid growth but the long time it takes them to fully mature, large breed puppies have vastly different nutritional needs from smaller breeds. Feeding them a food too high in calcium and phosphorus, as well as overfeeding in general, can lead to serious orthopedic problems.

The stomachs and digestive tracts of small breed puppies are tiny and do not have the capacity to utilize large amounts of food. Feeding smaller meals more frequently will have better results than giving fewer, larger meals. Hypoglycemia may be an issue in especially tiny puppies.

Regardless of breed and size, do not free feed or let your puppy eat as much as it wants - no matter how often this old, outdated method is still recommended. The more calories the diet provides, the faster your puppy will grow, and growth rates near or at the maximum potential are unhealthy, especially in large breed puppies. Slow, even growth without any "spurts" is much more beneficial. Contrary to all the old wives tales circulating on the internet and in email, excessive feeding of your large breed puppy while it is still growing will not result in a larger, stronger animal. No dog will grow larger than its predetermined genetic potential allows, regardless of how much you feed.

Do not let your puppy become overweight either. A "roly poly" little doggie may look cute, but all that extra weight isn't healthy at all.

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Fat
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Cornell University's December 2002 issue of the "Cornell Chronicle" mentions the results of a 14-year study, which found that eating less results in healthier, longer lives and that dogs forced to eat 25 percent less of the same balanced diet than their littermates lived significantly longer and suffered fewer canine diseases.

Sabine Contreras, Canine Care and Nutrition Consultant, offers [personalized feeding plans](#) for dogs of all sizes, breeds and ages, no matter if they are companions, performance, working or show dogs.



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