

First Veterinary Exam

Your puppy's first trip to the veterinarian is almost as much about educating you as examining your puppy. Besides your many questions and concerns, you need to bring whatever health information the seller or shelter provided to you, such as records of vaccinations and wormings.

While answering your questions, your veterinarian will likely do the following:

- Weigh your puppy and check her temperature as well as her pulse and breathing rate
- Listen for heart and lung abnormalities and examine other internal organs by palpating, or feeling them.
- Give your puppy's ears a going-over to ensure they not only look right but also smell right- no infections or parasites
- Check the puppy's genitals to ensure two testicles are present in males and there is no sign of discharge or infection in the females.
- Go over eyes, nose, skin, and the anal region carefully to check for discharge or other signs of disease or parasites.
- Open the puppy's mouth to see that teeth and gums look as they should.

A puppy exam is one of the best parts of a veterinarian's job, and your vet should work to keep it fun for the puppy as well. Your vet wants to set up a relationship where your puppy accommodates being handled without fear or aggression. You are an important part of this learning process. Do not encourage shyness or aggression in your puppy by soothing her. Be positive and a matter-of-fact in all your pup's social interactions in order to raise a confident, secure dog.

Because your puppy's immunity against disease is not yet like that of an adult dog, be sure to carry your puppy or keep her restrained on a leash into the veterinary hospital, and don't let her interact with other dogs. Inside the exam room, the veterinary staff takes precautions to protect your pet, such as cleaning off the exam table with disinfectants and washing their hands between patients.

Also, you're sure to have at least one urgent trip to the veterinarian's while raising your puppy- most people do – so make sure that you know what you should look for. The following are signs that your puppy needs immediate care:

- Allergic reactions, such as swelling around the face, or hives, most easily seen on the belly
- Any eye injury, no matter how mild
- Any respiratory problem: Chronic coughing, or trouble breathing
- Any signs of pain: Panting, labored breathing, increased body temperature, lethargy, restlessness, or loss of appetite.
- Any suspected poisoning, including ingestion of antifreeze, rodent or snail bait, or human medication
- Any wound or laceration that's open and bleeding, or any animal bite
- Seizure, fainting, or collapse
- Thermal stress, either too cold or too hot, even if the dog seems to have recovered
- Trauma, such as being hit by a car, even if the dog seems fine
- Vomiting or diarrhea, anything more than two or three times within an hour.

Bringing your puppy in for the first exam not only gets your new family member examined for future issues, but your veterinarian can put all your questions and concerns to rest.

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