

# Top Tips to Keep Your Pets Fit!



Keeping our pets in shape can mean a longer life for them, something every pet owner would love! It doesn't need to be difficult or complicated. A few easy changes can make a big difference over the years. Some may even help the human half of the partnership to enjoy a better life alongside their animal companion!

## Tip #1 - Start with your veterinarian

Fitness starts with a trip to your veterinarian. Use this visit to determine your pet's overall health and assess the ideal

weight for their age and breed. This will be your target goal and should only be set by a healthcare professional. By closely monitoring your pet's weight, and keeping it under control, you'll be able to easily spot any unexplained weight gain or loss, which may be an early sign of other trouble.

## Tip #2 - Not all pet food is created equal

Be sure to check the labels of the pet food you're feeding your pet. The most expensive food is not always the best, and the least expensive is not always the worst! For a complete rundown on how to choose pet food, check out "Think Two by Two when Choosing the Best Dog Food". In general, you'll want some type of meat (chicken or beef, for instance) to be the first ingredient, followed by "chicken meal" or "beef meal" as the second item. You don't want to see "fillers" like corn, grains or "meal" as the first ingredient.

## Tip #3 - Feed your pet only sensible snacks

The vast majority of pet owners give their pets treats each day - and who can blame them! It's important though to make them as healthy as possible and limit the number of treats they receive. Cat and dog treats are typically long on flavor and calories, but short on nutrition. Just a few per day is enough! You may also substitute a variety of fruits and vegetables which will be much healthier for them. Cats can be given cantaloupe, bananas and pumpkin, among other fruits. Dogs tend to like cantaloupe and pumpkin too, but also apples and blueberries.

## Tip #4 - No table scraps!

None...not ever! Cats and dogs were not designed to digest many of the things their human companions enjoy. It may be tempting, but pets are healthiest when their diet is limited to pet food and pet treats. It will also keep them out of trouble, as it won't encourage them to be constantly begging us for our food.

### **Tip #5 - Get your pet moving**

Making a few changes around your home and a few changes to your routine can really increase the amount of exercise your cat or dog receives on a daily basis. Of course, keep in mind any limitations your veterinarian imposed, but then be creative in getting them up and moving. For instance, put the cat toys on a high shelf or tuck the dog toys in the far corners of your home.

Even food dishes can be tucked away a bit to make them "earn" their meal (cats especially). Plan some fun games to get your kitty off the couch and up and down the stairs. Daily walks for a dog cannot be over-emphasized. They will love it and once you fit it in your routine, you probably will as well!

These five simple tips can help your pet not just live a long life, but a more enjoyable one as well. Who knows, you may even benefit from the example of a healthy, happy pet!