

Your puppy's first visit to the Vet



Preventative veterinary care is super important to keep your new puppy both healthy and happy. Like humans, very young and very old animals are most at risk of getting ill, so extra care needs to be taken in those first few months of a puppy's life.

Your puppy will have already had a visit to the vet whilst with its breeder. This visit usually takes place at 6-8 weeks of age and sees every puppy in the litter receive a full health check before being given its first vaccination dose.

At this visit, puppies are also implanted with a microchip (a permanent form of identification) that is used to help identify that puppy throughout its life. Your puppy's breeder will have also dosed all the puppies in the litter with a worming treatment every two weeks since birth.

You should receive information and certificates from your breeder showing the health treatments that have already completed, and indicating when the next treatments are due.

It is most likely that your puppy will need to be wormed a couple of weeks after arriving in its new home. Your breeder may have even included a dose of worm tablets in your puppy pack.

Puppies receive their second vaccination dose at 10-12 weeks of age (depending on the vaccination used) so let your vet know you are getting a new pup and they will be able to book an appointment.

Your Vet is a fabulous resource

Your vet is one of the best sources for reliable health information. They are not just there for when your puppy is ill or hurts themselves.

Your vet can provide information on normal puppy behaviour, what you need to do to prevent illness, and what you should do if your puppy looks unwell or gets hurt. They will be able to discuss health issues that may affect your breed, and tell you what symptoms to look out for.

Your first visit might take a while as your vet will want to answer all of your questions, and advise you on:

Vaccination requirements

Your puppy will have received some immunity from its mother's first milk, but this starts to wear off with time, leaving the puppy at risk of catching some nasty, and potentially fatal, diseases.

Puppies undergo a course of vaccinations to help them build immunity to a variety of common canine illnesses. It is important that you continue the puppy's vaccination program to reduce the risk that your puppy will contract an otherwise preventable disease. As an adult, your puppy will only require a booster vaccination every 1-3 years.

All puppies are vaccinated against the three killer dog diseases – **Canine Parvovirus**, **Canine Distemper**, and **Canine Infectious Hepatitis**.

Puppies are also vaccinated against both the viral and most common bacterial cause of **Canine Cough** (often called Kennel Cough). This is called a C5 vaccination ('C' for canine and '5' for the five diseases) and is often the minimum level of vaccination required if you want to attend training classes with your puppy, or have it board at a kennel whilst you are on holiday.

Depending on where you live, your vet may recommend other vaccinations and will be happy to discuss the reasons and best timing for these.

Internal and External parasites

This includes intestinal worms, heartworm (which is spread by mosquitoes), ticks and fleas.

All of these pesky parasites can cause your pet to become unwell. Some even pose a risk of disease to humans. So it is essential to know how to control and treat these problems and to minimise the risk of catching something yourself.



Diet

Your puppy is growing every day, and it is vital that the food it is eating meets both its energy and nutritional requirements. There is an old saying that 'you only get one chance to grow the dog' and this is particularly important in large and giant breeds, who are growing enormous amounts of bone and muscle in quite a short time. If something is missing from their diet, or they are over-supplemented, it may lead to permanent damage to the puppy's developing skeleton.

The amount of food your puppy will eat will continue to change through their growth periods and, as they get bigger, and you may also have to change the composition of their diet.

Although your breeder will continue to be a great source of advice, your vet can also help with ensuring your pup is in tiptop condition by weighing and assessing its body condition at each visit and discussing any diet-related questions you might have.

Grooming and handling

At your first vet visit, your vet will want to discuss how to care for your pup's coat. Grooming is especially important as your puppy transitions from its 'puppy coat' to its adult hair.

Your vet will also show you how to trim your pup's nails safely, check their ears and mouth, and do a basic all-over health check at home. This should help set you off on the right foot and make sure that any changes that might indicate something is wrong with your puppy are quickly noticed.

Normal puppy behaviour

Your vet will be able to answer your questions about what is normal puppy behaviour and give you some strategies that will help you survive those first few months.

Many vet clinics run puppy schools, so now might be a great time to book your puppy a place in the next class, or ask for a recommendation for a good puppy class or trainer in your area.

Preparing for the visit

Before your puppy's first visit to the vet, it can be a great idea to write a list of questions that you may have. There will be a lot to talk about, and having a list of questions means that you won't forget anything.

You should make sure that your puppy has a secure fitting collar and leash, or you may choose to transport it in a pet carrier. You don't want your puppy getting loose in the vet's car park, or running up to unfamiliar (and possibly unwell) animals in the waiting room.

Make sure that you allow your puppy to toilet before heading into the clinic – everything is so exciting and new, combined with a trip in the car, and it is easy for 'accidents' to occur.

Most vets will want your puppy to really enjoy that first visit so be prepared for treats and cuddles from all of the staff at the clinic.

They may also ask you to come at a time when they know things won't be too busy, so your puppy is not overwhelmed by a full waiting room of patients.

Having a great relationship with your vet is the key to ensuring your puppy has a long and healthy life, and that future vet visits are not too traumatic.

