



Keep holiday treats and candies out of your pet's reach as they can make your pet quite sick. In particular, chocolate can be toxic to dogs.

Don't feed your pet leftover holiday turkey or chicken, as the small bones or fragments can lodge in the throat, stomach, or intestinal tract.

At the very least, too much "people food" may give your pet an upset stomach.



Overweight Pets

You may think your pudgy pet is a happy pet. However, just as obesity is a problem for humans, obesity in our pets is a serious health issue. Extra pounds place an extra burden on virtually all of an overweight pet's organ systems, as well as its joints and ligaments. And joint problems can lead to an inactive lifestyle, which only perpetuates the problem.

Sometimes we give our pets treats just because we love them. We may even give them some of our food, or make sure that our dog or cat never has an empty food bowl. According to a study by the American Animal Hospital Association, as many as 89% of dog and cat owners feed their animals table scraps from time to time. However, "people food" is often too high in fat for your pet to metabolize properly; it may actually cause your pet to become a more finicky eater who will refuse to eat its more healthy pet food.

Health Risks for the Overweight Pet

- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ Skeletal stress, including damage to joints, bones, and ligaments
- ▶ Respiratory problems, increased blood pressure, and heart disease
- ▶ Decreased stamina and heat intolerance
- ▶ Decreased liver function
- ▶ Digestive disorders
- ▶ Decreased immune function
- ▶ Skin and hair coat problems
- ▶ Increased risk of cancer
- ▶ Urinary tract infections
- ▶ Decreased quality and length of life

Tips for Preventing Obesity in Your Pet

- ▶ Encourage exercise. Take your dog for walks. Play with your cat.
- ▶ Choose the correct type and amount of food. Simply cutting back on the amount of food you feed your pet may also decrease the amount of essential vitamins and minerals it receives. Prescription weight loss diets ensure an adequate intake of essential nutrients while eliminating excess calories. Your veterinarian can help you choose the right food for your pet.
- ▶ Regularly monitor the pet's weight. A small change in your pet's weight can have big consequences.
- ▶ Regulate your young dog's weight. Stop the problem before it starts by feeding your puppy healthy food, making sure it gets lots of exercise, and not giving it "people food."
- ▶ Limit or eliminate treats. Treats should be given sparingly and should not make up more than 10% of your pet's daily calories. A small treat says, "I love you" just as much as a large treat.
- ▶ Treat any medical problems or diseases. Just as in humans, obesity is sometimes a symptom of an underlying medical problem and may not be successfully addressed until any medical issues are dealt with.

What to Do If You Think Your Pet Is Overweight

If you think your pet is overweight, talk with your veterinarian, who can give you advice on a proper diet and exercise program. Your veterinarian will determine if there are any other medical problems contributing to your pet's obesity and give you advice on how fast your pet should lose weight.