

# Exercising Your Dog

- Exercise can have many health benefits for your dog.
- You can help your dog get plenty of exercise by scheduling regular activity.
- Consult your veterinarian before beginning an exercise program for your dog.

## Benefits

Exercise can have many health benefits for your dog. Regular exercise burns calories, reduces appetite, improves muscle tone, increases metabolism, and improves temperature regulation. It can be a valuable contributor to weight loss and maintenance. Exercise can also help stimulate your dog's mind, thereby preventing boredom and destructive behaviors.

## Needs and Precautions

Individual exercise needs vary based on breed or breed mix, sex, age, and level of health. If your dog is a 6- to 18-month adolescent or a sporting, herding, hound, or terrier breed or mixed breed, your dog's exercise requirements are high. However, strenuous exercise can cause problems in some dogs, especially those that are not fit or are very young or old. Athletic owners should consider this to avoid overexerting their dogs, especially in hot or humid weather. When starting a new exercise routine, go slowly for the first week to give your dog a chance to adapt to it. On hot or cold days, go easy or rest. Consult your veterinarian before beginning an exercise program for your dog.

## Get Moving

Various kinds of exercise can help satisfy your dog's instinctive urges to dig, herd, chew, retrieve, and chase. Here are some good exercise options for most dogs:

- Walking or jogging
- Fetch
- Playing with other pets

- Running off leash
- Swimming (great for arthritic dogs)
- Tricks for low-calorie treats (*see the box for ideas*)
- Tug of war if appropriate for your breed

You can help your dog get plenty of exercise by scheduling regular playtimes and walks. For walks, work up to a brisk, 10- to 20-minute walk or jog once or twice a day. If you don't have time to walk your dog, hire a dog walker. Consider adopting another pet so that your dog has a playmate that encourages activity. If you don't want to commit to a new pet, try scheduling regular visits with the pet of a friend or relative. Doggy day care centers can also help ensure that your dog gets plenty of exercise throughout the day.

**Do not feed your dog (or cat) grapes or raisins because they have reportedly caused kidney problems in pets.**

## Low-Calorie Dog Treats

- Apple slices
- Banana slices
- Carrot slices
- Commercial dog treats (low-calorie or formulated for a smaller dog)
- Green beans
- Lean meat (cooked)
- Melon chunks
- Pear slices
- Popcorn (without butter or oil)
- Unflavored rice cake pieces

If your dog has food allergies, consult your veterinarian about which treats are safe and appropriate.