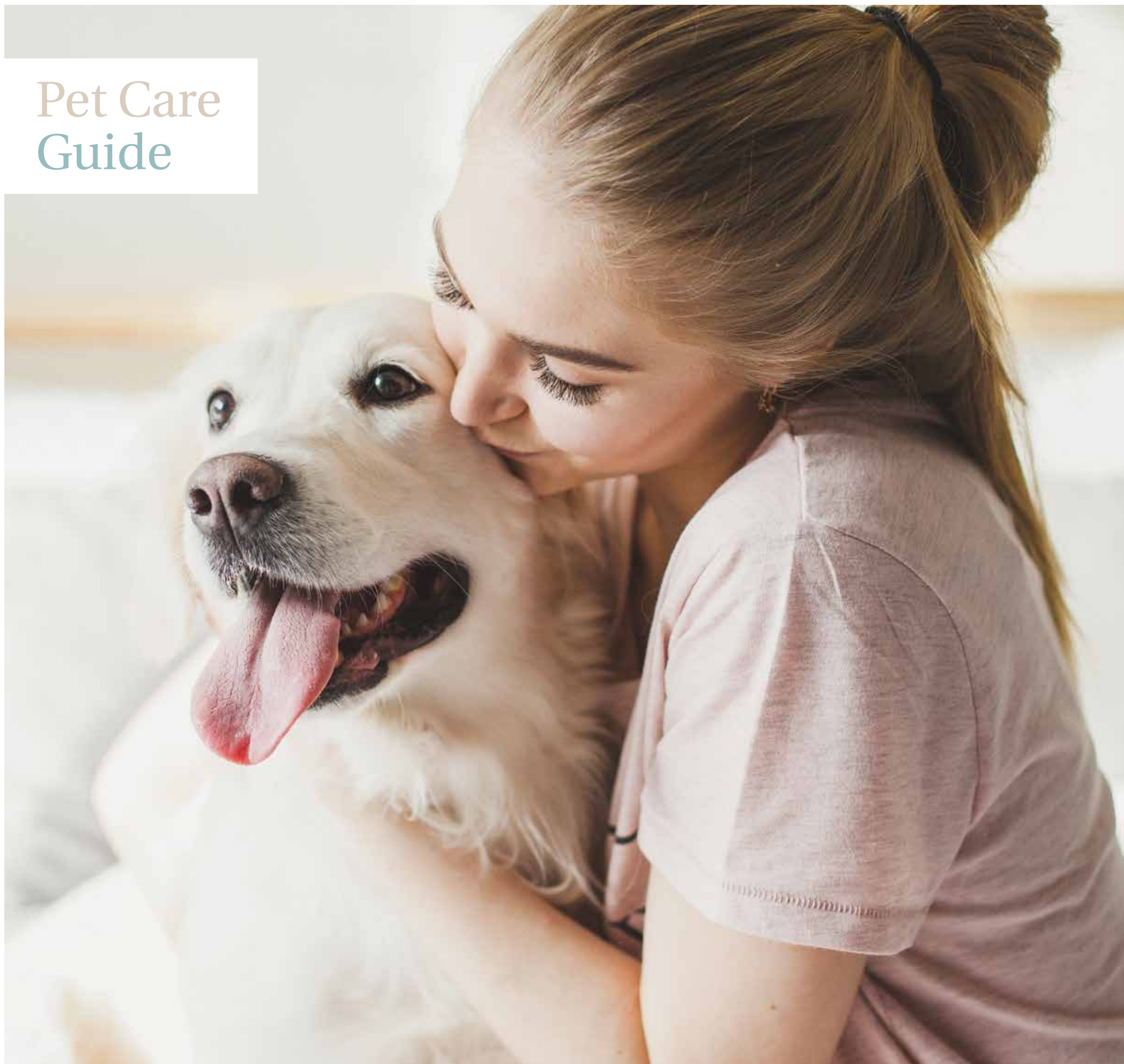


# Pet Care Guide



# Obesity and Pets

According to the Association of Pet Obesity Prevention, in 2017, more than 56 percent of pet dogs were overweight or obese and 60 percent of cats fell in the same category.

Owners must ensure their pets maintain healthy diets and remain active to avoid putting their animals at risk of developing serious diseases.

Here are a few questions the Association of Pet Obesity Prevention suggests asking your pet's veterinarian.

## IS MY PET OVERWEIGHT?

To determine if a lifestyle overhaul is required, you should discuss if your pet is at a healthy weight. This can be a touchy subject in most offices, as some professionals will be hesitant to hurt your feelings by suggesting your furry friend is unhealthy. Don't be offended if you receive an honest answer you don't want to hear.

A healthy weight is one of the largest factors of longevity, quality of life and prevention of disease. Fortunately, it is usually an easy process to discover if an animal needs to cut out the snacks or spend extra time exercising. Typically, a few measurements and a comparison on a body



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condition test will reveal the correct steps to take to achieve an ideal weight.

## HOW MANY CALORIES SHOULD MY PET CONSUME?

This answer may be more difficult to answer. The correct

number will largely depend on a pet's diet, exercise habits and weight. Once a veterinarian determines a healthy amount, calorie tracking can be extremely helpful to stay within proper levels. Consider using an app where you can manually enter different

caloric content and track your pet's progress.

## WHAT KINDS OF EXERCISES ARE CORRECT?

Once your pet has been deemed obese or overweight, a strict exercise regimen

should be incorporated. A veterinarian will be able to tell you which types of activities will be most effective by breed, size and age. Especially for senior pets, it's crucial to stick to their recommendations as overexerting them can be dangerous.



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# Pamper Your Pet

Show your four-legged bestie your appreciation for their companionship and unconditional love by pampering them. Don't be discouraged if there isn't enough money in your budget to purchase the latest and greatest toys or treats; a prized moment in a pet's life is when their owners give their attention and affection.

Consider these awesome ideas to give your pet a day of excitement or make them more comfortable with an addition to the home.

## A NEW BED

Much like us, our pets love to be comfortable, even if sometimes their sleeping positions say otherwise. If their bedding is worn out, consider purchasing a new mattress to rest their head.

Ensure the stuffing is pet friendly,

especially if you have a curious animal who is more interested in finding out what is inside the bed. To add even more comfort, you can include an orthopedic pillow and comfortable blankets.

## BUILD A PLAY AREA

Dog owners can design an area in their backyards which encourage exercise while allowing their pups to burn off some steam. Try to include compo-

nents which will require them to use their balance, agility and hurdling abilities. If you are the proud owner of an indoor cat, consider building a climbing area filled with scratching posts, rest areas and include toys or catnip throughout the path.

## GLAMOUR SHOTS

This one may be more for an owner than an actual pet, but who doesn't love glamour shots of their animal? You will

be rewarded with beautiful photos to display while the model will enjoy the attention they receive from a photographer. It's a win-win.

## WHILE YOU'RE AWAY

If you're planning a vacation but are unable to bring your pet, look for a luxury resort in your area or on the way to your destination. Professionals will ensure they exercise, eat nutritional meals and receive the utmost care.



# Money Saving Tips

Every responsible pet owner realizes their four-legged friends is a commitment. In addition to annual wellness checks, there are often emergencies. The American Veterinary Medical Association reports cost of pet care is increasing due to advances in medical technology. For this reason, they suggest acquiring pet health insurance.

Of course, you should ask your local provider for thorough details regarding what is covered, if premiums increase as your pet ages and if you can choose your own veterinarian. Read on for other considerations you should make when planning on how to afford the wellness of your pet.

## **CUTTING COSTS WITH REGULAR CARE**

Most veterinarians urge owners to complete annual wellness exams and vaccinations to help

avoid expensive emergencies. A benefit to these checkups is finding issues early, before they become serious problems. Not only will treatments be more affordable, your pet will have a better chance of overcoming a medical scare with proper care.

The AVMA suggests these tests and procedures should be completed regularly to maintain a healthy quality of life.

- Annual Vaccinations

- Heartworm Exams
- Fecal Parasite Tests
- Dental Evaluations

It's important to adjust the frequency of your visits based on a vet's recommendations. As your pet matures or begins developing health problems, the number of exams they require may need to be increased. Remember, promoting a healthy lifestyle is the best route to avoid expensive emergency situations.

# Caring for a Senior Pet

As your beloved pet ages, you may notice concerning behavior changes. While some differences may not seem significant, they must be reported to your veterinarian, especially as animals begin their senior years. Urgency is key as some symptoms can be caused by medical problems that demand immediate attention.

Advances in medical technology are helping aging pets live out their senior years in comfort and with good health. Don't hesitate if you are concerned they are developing difficulties you feel must be addressed.

## DON'T IGNORE THE SIGNS

Sometimes owners overlook changes in their pets and dismiss it as merely a circumstance of growing older. But some signs of getting older are really signs of illness. Simple tests of blood and urine can rule out serious organ diseases and help you create a strategy to improve your pet's quality of life.

## COMMON SYMPTOMS

To understand what you are looking for in terms of changes to your pet's demeanor, here are some common problems associated with aging, per the American Veterinarian.

**Musculoskeletal Issues:** May cause signs of aggression while lying down and are forced to move or excessive licking of their feet or joints.

**Gastroenteritis Disorder:** Animals suffering from a GI problem will often display aggressive tendencies toward people while eating. This disorder commonly causes anxiety



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and can lead to destructive behaviors including biting and chewing.

**Arthritis:** An extremely common disease in aging pets, arthritis is easily spotted when animals show discomfort when moving or are hesi-

tant to climb stairs or leap to high areas. The irritability sometimes leads to them acting out, aggressively.

## WHEN IS YOUR PET A SENIOR?

You have probably heard

the rule that one year for humans equals seven years for dogs. It's not that simple. Animals age at different paces depending on breed, size and overall health. As a general guideline, the Loving Care Pet Hospital suggests cats and

small dogs are considered seniors at the age of seven, where larger dogs reach the milestone at five or six. Regular visits to a veterinarian are important to best determine your aging pet's need for increased medical attention.

# Pet-Specific First-Aid Kit

**Y**ou may already know the importance of keeping a first-aid kit around. Since animals are naturally curious and act on instincts, it can be lifesaving to have an emergency kit specifically for their needs, especially if you are far from home and medical care.

Many of the recommended items to keep at hand for your furry friends are also featured in household first-aid kits for humans. It's easy to purchase a general kit then add a few animal-specific items.

Look at these great tips from the United States Humane Society when creating a first-aid kit for your pet.

## SUPPLIES

Your basic first-aid kits will have crucial supplies for both people and pets. Some should include: hydrogen peroxide, absorbent-gauze pads, disposable gloves and antiseptic wipes. Don't forget these pet-specific items as recommended by The Humane Society of The United States.

- Pack an animal first-aid book, with general information on how to tend to minor emergencies.

- Carry along self-cling bandages; they will adhere to itself without interfering with pet fur.

- It's important to have a muzzle or strips of cloth to prevent biting if an animal is in distress. Avoid using them if your pet is vomiting, choking or having difficulty breathing.

## IMPORTANT DOCUMENTATION

In addition to carrying the



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necessary supplies, you should also have important documentation about your pet. Keep a list of phone numbers featuring the veterinarian's office, nearest emergency clinic and poison-control hotline.

You should also have documents proving your pet has been properly vaccinated and a current photograph in case they become lost. Remember to keep all documentation in a waterproof container to avoid becoming damaged.

## MAINTENANCE

As time goes on, you will likely adjust the first-aid kit you have built. Keep a close eye on expiration dates of items like medicine or cleaning solutions. Another reason your kit will change is due to

your pet aging.

As they get older, you will probably need to add additional medications. Explain your plan of building a kit to your veterinarian to find out if you can purchase extra prescriptions.

# Diabetic Pets

According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, diabetes is most common in older pets but still occurs in younger and pregnant animals. Much like when the disease is found in people, early detection makes it more manageable. Learn the warning signs and how to care for your pet suffering from diabetes.

A common form of the disease found in dogs is deemed Type I. It is typically caused when the pancreas is unable to produce efficient levels of insulin. Pups who suffer from this disorder will require special therapy treatments to survive. Cats will more commonly experience Type II, which is the lack of normal response to insulin.

Diabetic pets can live long and healthy lives with proper treatment. However, if left untreated, there may be life-threatening consequences.

## SYMPTOMS

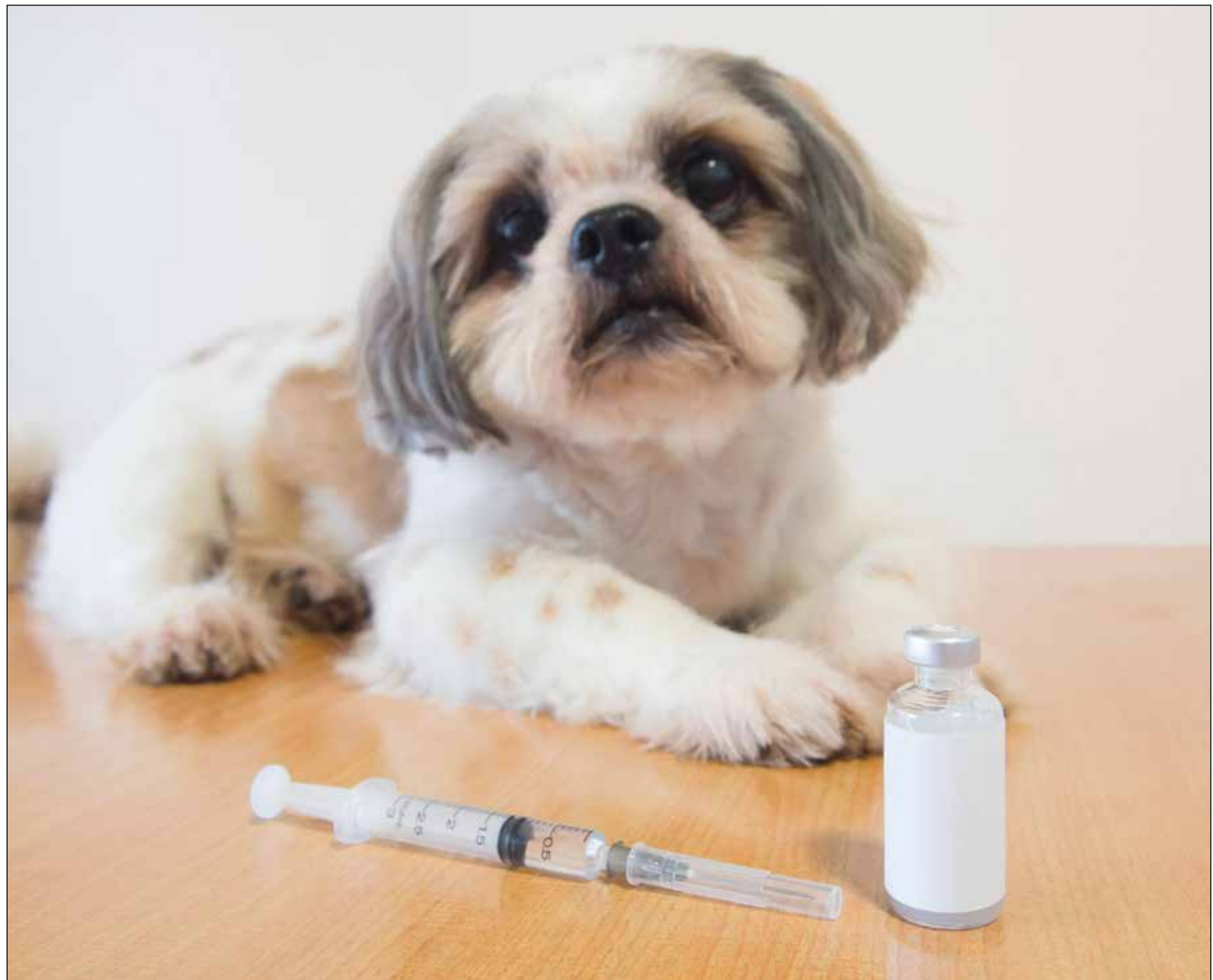
It is sometimes easy to notice the symptoms and bring it to the attention of your veterinarian. Here are a few things to look for if you see your pet isn't acting like themselves, per the AVMA.

- Excessive water drinking and increased urination.
- Decreased appetite and cloudy eyes.
- Chronic or recurring infections such as skin and urinary issues.

## RISK FACTORS

While our beloved pets can be affected by diabetes at any age, the AVMA reports dogs are usually diagnosed around the age of seven, whereas diabetic cats are usually older than six.

It is also reported female dogs are at double the risk of male dogs, and certain canine breeds are predisposed to the condition. A study performed by the National Institutes of Health revealed pugs, toy poodles, miniature schnauzers and miniature poodles are at a high risk of developing diabetes.



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## MEDICAL TREATMENTS

Once it is discovered that your pet is diabetic, your vet will discuss their treatment plan.

Typically, a dog or cat will need life-long insulin injections, frequent examinations and blood and urine tests. A veterinarian will show you

how to give the insulin shot. Be honest with your vet if you don't feel the condition is getting better as dosages may require an adjustment.

# Importance of Vaccinations

To ensure your pet lives a healthy and wholesome life, it is important to maintain a vaccination schedule. Exposure to dangerous diseases exist nearly everywhere other animals are present, this includes boarding kennels, parks and sometimes, even your own backyard.

Build a trusting relationship with your veterinarian to make sure all vaccinations are done on time. These preventative treatments will keep your precious pet safe if they do meet an infectious disease. Keep in mind that some inoculations can take days or even weeks to be effective. It's best to be wary of your vet's advice before exposing them to other animals.

## HOW THEY WORK

Vaccines are developed to prepare your pet's immune system for exposure in real life. The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals states vaccinations contain antigens, which copy disease-causing organisms in common illnesses. Once a pet is introduced to these organisms, their body is mildly stimulated and prepared to recognize and fight off the invasion if they are exposed to the actual disease.

Some vaccinations, like rabies prevention, are required by law, while others can be recommended by veterinarians. Take their advice based on your pet's age, breed and general health condition to provide them with the best defense for life-threatening conditions.



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## COMMON VACCINATIONS TO CONSIDER

Prepare yourself for a vet visit by understanding which vaccinations your pet should have. These common disease fighters are suggested by the organization American Humane.

### For Dogs

- Distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza

and parvovirus: This effective combination vaccine protects pups from all four diseases in its name.

- Lyme disease: In certain regions, ticks are known for carrying this debilitating disease and passing it on to dogs. Based on geography, your veterinarian may urge this important vaccine.
- Bordetella: Commonly called ken-

nel cough, it is a very contagious upper respiratory infection. Most veterinarians will recommend this vaccine before bringing your pooch to a dog park, groomer or boarding kennel.

### For Cats

- Feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia: This combination shot meant for felines protects

against three diseases commonly found in cats.

- Feline leukemia: Typically, this infection is transmitted through close contact. It is usually recommended for cats who go outdoors.
- Chlamydia: A bacterial infection which causes severe conjunctivitis. In some cases, it may be included in the combination distemper shot, FVRCP-C.