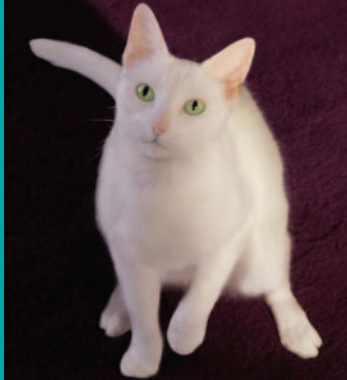


Providing proper nourishment for your pet is one of the easiest yet most important ways you can ensure a lifetime of good health.

Just as in people, the right diet can help pets to stay healthier and live longer. It can even help prevent or manage certain diseases.



How to make sure your pet is properly nourished:

- **Feed a high quality diet** that is suitable for your pet's lifestage, and always offer plenty of fresh, clean water.
- **Pay close attention to your pet.** Bright eyes, an energetic attitude, proper body condition (see the illustration inside), and a shiny coat are all indications of proper nutrition.
- **Always discuss your pet's nutritional plan with your veterinarian.** He or she is your best source of expert advice about the many diets available.

Q & A

Are there any pet foods that promote healthy teeth?

Yes. Dental diets can actually help decrease the accumulation of plaque on your pet's teeth, helping to keep the teeth and gums clean and healthy. Ask your veterinarian for advice on specific brands.

My pet's a finicky eater. How can I get her to eat right?

Some pets prefer a particular taste or texture to their food. Try a different kibble size or meal formulation, such as chicken rather than beef, tuna rather than sardines.

Is it better to feed pets canned or dry food?

Either choice is fine, but many veterinarians recommend a mix of both for optimal palatability.

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Why good nutrition is vital to good health

A high quality diet will provide your pet with the correct balance of essential vitamins, minerals, and nutrients needed for optimum health. Your pet will benefit in many ways, from a shinier coat to a boosted immune system.

Feeding your youngster (up to 12 months)

Puppies and kittens need a diet formulated for growth. By maturity, most youngsters will have increased their birth weight by 40 to 50 times!

A growth diet will help your little friend develop strong muscles, bones, and teeth. The higher levels of protein and other nutrients provide the nutritional “building blocks” needed for this lifespan.

The nutritional needs of puppies can vary by breed. Both underfeeding and overfeeding can lead to health problems. With kittens, it is very important to make sure they eat their own food and do not snack on the food of other household pets.

Make sure you map out a complete nutritional plan for your pet with your VCA veterinarian.

Feeding your adult pet (Years 1-6)

The nutritional needs of animals naturally taper off as they enter adulthood.

Dogs are omnivores, meaning that they can eat vegetable matter and grains as well as meat, but they do require a significant amount of protein in their diet.

Cats, on the other hand, are true carnivores, who require even more protein. Cats also cannot produce the essential amino acid taurine (found in eggs, fish, meat and milk), and, as a result, need a diet supplemented with it in order to stay healthy.

Feeding your senior citizen (Years 7+)

All pets age differently, so the decision to start your pet on a senior diet should be made in consultation with your VCA veterinarian. Generally, most veterinarians will say a pet is entering the senior years at age 7.

Fortunately, there are now senior diets that offer:

- **Antioxidant blends** that can help boost your aging pet’s immune system, and improve age-related cognitive behavioral changes, and
- **Joint supplements** that can help manage arthritic joints, and
- **Special formulations** that are easier on more sensitive senior digestive and urinary systems.

Body weight often becomes an issue in older animals. Thankfully, there are diets to help with both obese and underweight animals.

VCA Pet Tips:

- 1 Youngsters need to eat more frequently than older pets. Several small meals a day are best.
- 2 It is very important not to feed table food to your pet, as he or she could end up eating less properly balanced pet food.

Foods that fight disease

Due to better nutrition and veterinary care, America’s pets are living longer. However, as a result, they’re increasingly suffering from many of the same chronic diseases that affect humans: heart and kidney disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Thankfully, therapeutic diets can help prevent, manage, or even treat many conditions. For example, a sodium-restricted diet may help a dog with heart disease. Ask your VCA veterinarian for specific recommendations.

Visual guide to healthy body weight



Too thin

Perfect weight

Overweight

How to read pet food labels

1. Make sure the label of any food you feed your pet states that it offers “complete and balanced nutrition for all stages of life” or words to that effect. The label should support that claim by stating that the food has undergone feeding tests or trials.
2. Two different pet foods can have the exact same ingredient list, but differ greatly in terms of the actual nutrition they offer. Lower cost brands tend to provide less nutrition.
3. Always check for a “best before” date to make sure the food you’re feeding your pet is as fresh as possible.