

WHAT OWNERS NEED TO KNOW

Being overweight is the most common nutritional disorder in dogs, usually resulting from dogs eating too much or moving too little¹. Genetics also play a part, with certain breeds at greater risk of becoming overweight².

How do I tell if my dog is overweight³?

- Struggling to see or feel your dog's ribs, spine or waistline.
- Abdominal sagging.
- Reduced mobility, reluctance to go on walks, play games and climb stairs.
- Excessive panting or difficulty breathing.



What are the risks if my dog is overweight?

- Your dog may have a shorter and reduced quality of life⁴.
- Higher frequencies of unpleasant diseases including arthritis, heart disease, breathing problems and certain types of cancer².



How do I prevent my dog becoming overweight?

- Regularly weigh your dog and assess their body condition using this [standard scale](#)⁵.
- Consider what and how often you feed your dog. Treats should make up less than 10% of your dog's diet.
- Avoid high calorie treats and titbits.
- Adjust how much you feed depending on your dog's body shape. Don't stick to guidelines if that amount makes your dog gain weight.
- Ensure your dog gets enough exercise (discuss with your vet if unsure).
- Neutered dogs are at risk of weight gain⁶. Adjust your dog's diet and exercise after neutering.
- Certain breeds, such as Pugs, Beagles and Golden Retrievers, are at higher risk of becoming overweight⁶. Owners of these breeds should take extra care over their dog's diet and exercise.
- Weight gain is common in middle-aged dogs⁶. Continue to pay attention to your dog's weight as they age.
- Before getting a dog, consider if you can meet the lifestyle and exercise needs of the breed.

What should I do if my dog is already overweight?

- The good news is that weight gain is reversible, but requires some effort from you.
- Discuss your dog's diet and lifestyle with your vet. There are calorie-restricted veterinary diets available which might benefit your dog.
- Many vet practices offer "weight clinics" as a way to monitor your dog's weight loss journey.



[LINK TO VETCOMPASS STUDY INFOGRAPHIC](#)

References

1. Bland, I. et al. (2009) Dog obesity: owner attitudes and behaviour. Preventive veterinary medicine.
2. Raffan, E. (2013) The big problem: battling companion animal obesity. Veterinary Record.
3. The Kennel Club (2021) Obesity in Dogs <https://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/health-and-dog-care/health/health-and-care/a-z-of-health-and-care-issues/obesity/>
4. German, A.J. et al. (2012) Quality of life is reduced in obese dogs but improves after successful weight loss. The Veterinary Journal.
5. WSAVA (2013) Body Condition Score <https://wsava.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Body-Condition-Score-Dog.pdf>
6. Pegram, C. et al. (2021) Frequency, breed predisposition and demographic risk factors for overweight status in dogs in the UK. Journal of Small Animal Practice.