

10 tips for dog weight loss

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1. Control access to food. Feed at specific times and leave food out for 20 minutes, then take away whatever isn't eaten. Also, feed three or four smaller meals daily: Dogs that can eat 24 hours a day or that get one daily meal are more likely to be overweight.

2. Know the exact amounts you feed. Use standard measuring cups to scoop out dry food, and count cans of wet food. Also, keep track of snacks and "people food".

3. Adjust serving sizes to fit your dog. Feeding guidelines on packages are typically high. It's safe to cut back 15% to 25%, experts say.

4. Know what you're buying. Dogs tend to overeat high-fat foods. Check labels for "low-fat", "lowcalorie," "light" or "lean". Canned food typically has more fat than dry.

5. Cut back on, or cut out treats. Habitual treating ups a dog's odds of obesity by 50%, a new study says. Don't feed from the table. Give low-cal carrots, pieces of apple and air-popped popcorn. Break big treats into pieces.

6. No crash diets. These don't give permanent results.

7. Increase activity. In a study, a dog's odds of obesity dropped 10% for each added hour of exercise a week. **8. Add bulk.** Specially formulated high-fiber dog foods can produce a feeling of fullness and reduce your dog's calorie intake, causing weight loss.

9. If your dog is overweight, cut what it eats by 25%. That should bring a slow, steady weight loss. Research shows dogs do best when they lose slightly more than 1% of body weight a week.

10. Talk to your vet. If your dog is obese (needs to lose 20% or more), see a vet. A vet can figure caloric needs and may prescribe a special weight-loss food. Be patient: It can take 18 months for an obese dog to safely regain a normal figure.

What Dog Food Labels Mean Source: Nestle Purina Petcare Co.

Low-calorie, light or lite Dry food: no more than 310 calories per 3.5 ounces (100 grams, about 1 cup) Wet (canned) food: no more than 90 calories per 3.5 ounces (100 grams, about 1/2 cup). Low-fat or lean Dry food: no more than 9% fat. Wet (canned) food: no more than 4% fat. Reduced-calorie, less calories, reduced-fat, less fat. Less than another food, as shown by comparison on label.