

Keeping your dog at a healthy weight is an investment in their long-term health, lowering the risks of arthritis, diabetes, heart problems, certain cancers, and more.

So, how do you know if your dog is at a healthy weight? Furthermore, how do you maintain that weight if your pup loves to eat?

Read on to learn more about this important dog health consideration.

An Important Health Consideration for Your Dog: Their Weight

Dogs may look cute when they're on the "plump" side. However, extra weight can lead to a variety of health issues.

Obesity is one of the most common health problems in dogs today—with more than 55.8% of dogs in the U.S. being considered overweight or obese!*

So, why is this a concern?

Extra body fat puts a dog at a higher risk for...

- Arthritis
- Back and joint injuries
- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- Heart and lung conditions
- Liver problems
- Certain cancers
- A shorter life span

For these reasons, keeping your dog at their ideal weight is very important to their overall health.

How to Tell If Your Dog is At Their Ideal Weight

Dogs come in a variety of shapes and sizes. Even within the same breed, healthy individual dogs can have different ideal body weights.

To provide an objective measurement, most veterinarians look at the Body Condition Score.

What is a Body Condition Score?

Your dog's body condition score, or BCS, is a standard way of estimating whether a dog is at their ideal weight, or under- or overweight.

The most commonly used scale ranks a dog on a scale from 1-9, with 4.5 being ideal (5 is mid-range and acceptable, and 4 is just on the slim side of normal). 1 is underweight, and 9 is obese. Note: Sometimes a scale of 1-5 is used, where 3 is ideal.

Estimate your dog's BCS using the diagram to the right:

- Look: Observe your dog's shape from the side, and from above.
- Feel: Run your hands along your dog's rib cage.
- Where does your dog fit on the scale of 1-9?
 - For an ideal score (4.5-5), your dog's ribs should not be easily visible from a distance, but you should be able to feel the ribs. As a dog gains weight, the ribs become more difficult to feel due to fat covering.
 - Also, you should be able to observe your dog's natural waist from above, and their tummy should "tuck up" behind their ribs when viewed from the side.

Some breeds, such as Bulldogs, may have a shape that looks different, but they should still have ribs you can feel, and stomachs that don't stick out beyond their rib cage.

This scale can give you a good idea of where your dog is right now, but it's always best to check with your veterinarian to know for sure.

Weight Management Tips for Dogs

If your dog is overweight, don't despair, there is plenty you can do to help your furry family member!

As you plan your dog's weight loss plan, here are four things to keep in mind:

1. Is There a Health Concern?

Some health conditions cause weight gain—such as low thyroid production, or another hormonal imbalance.

Fortunately, these conditions can be managed with medication. Your veterinarian may recommend bloodwork testing for these conditions, especially if your dog shows any other symptoms such as hair loss.

2. Healthy Weight Loss

Veterinary nutritionists recommend dogs lose about 1% of their body weight per week. So if your dog weighs 50 lbs., you should aim for a weight loss of 1/2 lb. per week.

If your dog loses weight slower than that, it's okay! They just shouldn't lose weight faster than that.

Your dog should have weigh-ins at your veterinarian's office every 2-3 weeks, to ensure the weight loss plan is effective and safe, and allow for changes along the way.

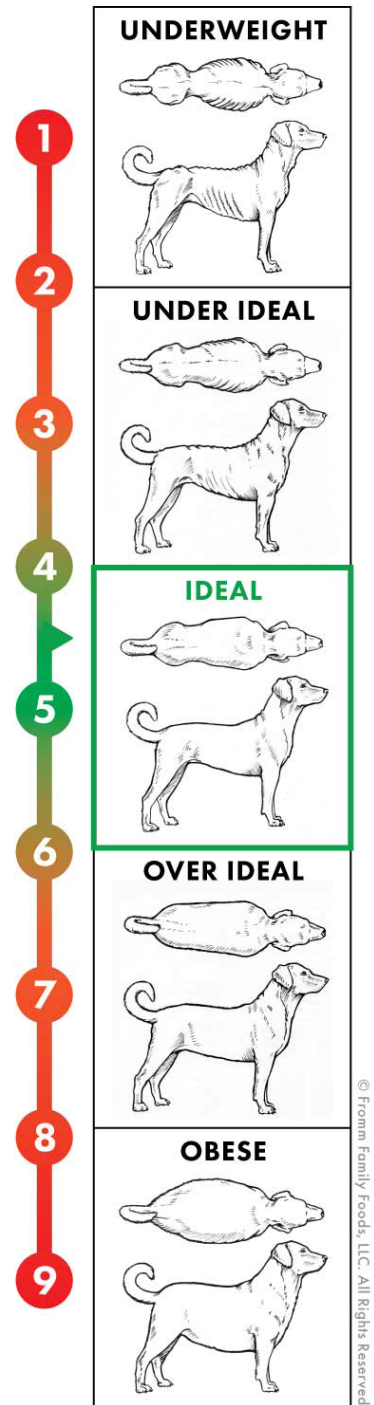
3. Exercise

Exercise is important to a healthy lifestyle.

For some dogs, this may mean long walks around the neighborhood or jogging on trails. For other dogs, it may mean playing fetch or games indoors (especially if the weather is too hot or cold for them outside).

To determine what works best for you and your dog, start slow. Pushing your dog to do too much could result in injury, overexertion, and resistance to future exercise attempts.

A short, 5-minute walk is a good starting point for most dogs. Then increase gradually, observing your dog for signs of tiredness.



4. Food and Treats

A healthy weight begins with what you put in your dog's bowl. Try these steps...

- Ask our Customer Service Team or your veterinarian to put together a plan on how much to feed and for an estimate of what your dog's ideal weight should be.
- Make decreases in food portions gradually. A sudden, large decrease can be unhealthy and unpleasant.
- Use proper measuring techniques. This can be done by weighing out a portion or using a standard 8 fluid-ounce measuring cup. Avoid 'guestimating' or using other household cups or scoops.
- Adjust your dog's portion to reflect their current activity level, age, breed, and individual metabolism. When feeding a high quality, highly digestible kibble, your dog will need less food than when feeding a lower quality kibble. Closely monitor stool quality, and if loose stool occurs, scale back the portion amount. A very common reason for soft stools or diarrhea is overfeeding a high quality diet.
- Use treats in moderation (less than 10% of your dog's daily calories). Try low calorie options such as frozen green beans, broccoli, lettuce, Crunchy Os, or any other pet-safe treats your veterinarian recommends.
- Feed a weight loss food for dogs. These diets contain more of certain nutrients like fiber to help your dog feel full, and they're designed to be nutritionally complete and balanced at lower portions. Dramatically decreasing the portion of a standard food for an extended period of time could result in malnourishment—because in addition to fewer calories, your dog would receive less than their daily requirement of essential nutrients, vitamins, and minerals. Weight loss foods prevent this problem.

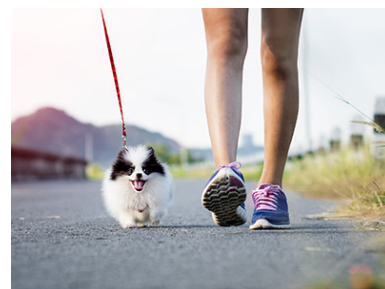
Try one of these wholesome weight-loss recipes

Each supplemented with L-carnitine, which can help aid in the utilization of fatty acids for energy

Weight Management Gold (for adult dogs under 50 lbs): A turkey, chicken, and whole grains recipe

Large Breed Weight Management Gold (for adult dogs 50 lbs and over): Formulated specially for large and giant breeds

Gold Coast Weight Management: A grain-free blend of wild caught salmon and whitefish



Maintaining a Healthy Weight

Once your pup has reached their ideal weight, you'll probably notice they have more energy and motivation for their favorite activities.

To maintain their health and quality of life, it's important to maintain their new, ideal body weight.

Talk to your veterinarian about the best maintenance diet for your pup, and keep up those fun walks or other activities you and your dog do together. Your pup will love the time with you—and you'll feel good knowing you're doing everything you can to keep your best friend healthy.

* Association for Pet Obesity Prevention, <https://petobesityprevention.org/2018>