

FEEDING PUPPIES

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HOW TO FEED

“Once puppies are weaned many nutritional mistakes can and have been made which affect the entire life of the dog. Numerous approaches to feeding puppies and adult dogs have been tried over the years. Historically, the recommendations for puppies have varied from feeding puppies free choice to feeding all they can eat two to three times a day. While intuitively this seems to make sense since they are growing rapidly. Unfortunately, this is the worst thing to do! *Overnutrition is the most common form of malnutrition in companion animals.* During growth excessive energy intake can be particularly devastating, especially in puppies of large breeds. Overnutrition during the growth phases can exacerbate developmental skeletal diseases, including hip dysplasia, osteochondritis dissecans, and wobbler’s syndrome. In contrast, caloric restriction leads to an increase in both lifespan and overall health in every species studied. Therefore, except for the toy and miniature breeds, some form of controlled feeding should be instituted for puppies.”

Current recommendations “for feeding puppies are that they should be fed all they can eat for 5 to 10 minutes four times daily until they are about 50% of their adult body weight. *Do not leave food down between meals!* Feeding frequency is then reduced to twice daily. The exception to this is the toy and miniature breeds.” These puppies should have food offered at least every four hours starting out because they have limited ability to store energy and they have a high metabolic rate for their size. If toy and miniature breeds are to be unattended for longer than 4 to 5 hours, then they should have some food left down free choice.

Puppies should be fed a gruel of puppy food blended with water from 3 to 5 weeks of age. At 5 weeks solid food can be introduced and full weaning can occur at 6 to 7 weeks of age. Puppy foods should be fed until the puppy is about 90 to 100% of growth and weight. One way to determine this is to measure shoulder height monthly (be as accurate as possible) and when growth has obviously stopped, then switch to an adult food.

WHAT TO FEED

At *Friendship Springs Veterinary Care* we recommend feeding only premium foods from premium companies. This includes *Purina Pro Plan*, *Hill’s Science Diet*, *Iam’s Eukanuba*, and *Royal Canin* (no, this is not a misspelling and, yes, they also make food for cats, too). Puppies should be fed weight-specific foods (i.e. small breed food for small breed puppies, and so on).

Reference

Bistner SI, Ford RB, Raffe MR: book. *Handbook of Veterinary Procedures and Emergency Treatment*, 7th Ed, Pg 794-802. Philadelphia, PA 2000.