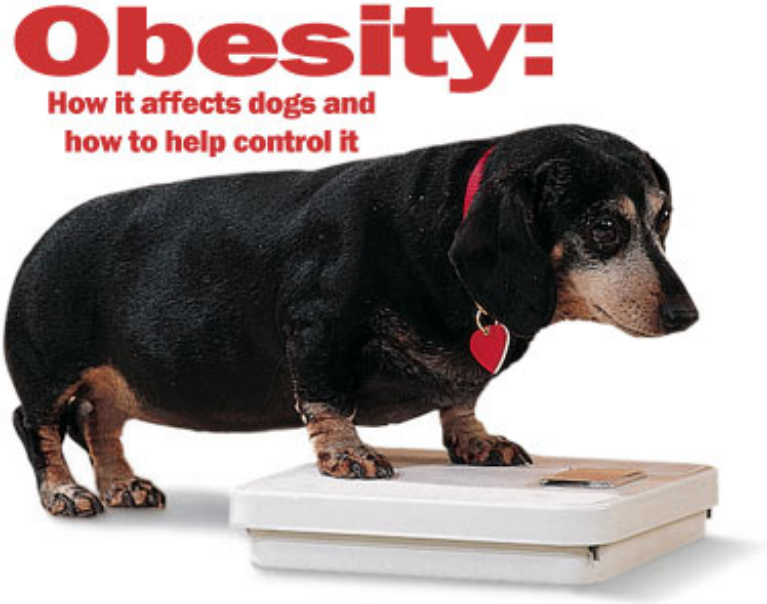
Obesity in Dogs: How to Help Control It

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Obesity may be the number one health problem for domestic pets. And, obesity leads to inactivity, which leads to more obesity and health conditions like heart and liver disease, diabetes, arthritis, and an increased surgical/anesthesia risk. Studies of our pets have shown that a quarter to a third of all American pets could stand to lose weight. As veterinary professionals, even we have trouble keeping a pet with a propensity to be overweight as healthy as we can.

Plump Pups

Obesity in dogs is considered a disease. Fat cells release inflammatory mediators, creating a state of chronic inflammation. It is this chronic inflammation that leads to many detrimental diseases:

- Bone and joint problems can be caused or exacerbated by obesity.
- An obese dog may have high blood pressure and is at risk for heart disease and more serious lung conditions. Congestive heart failure has been linked to obesity as well.
- Obesity also plays a major role in liver and kidney disease. Although the pet's organs remain the same size, his bigger body produces more waste products and toxins for the liver and kidneys to filter out. This increases their workload significantly. Overweight dogs are twice as likely to form bladder stones as well.
- In addition, being overweight or obese plays a huge role in cancer, diabetes, reproductive problems, stomach and intestinal problems, and even heat stroke.
- The obese pet may even be at greater risk when being anesthetized for

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*

surgical procedures. Being obese can decrease your pet's life expectancy and make the life he does have very uncomfortable.

Bred For Fat?

Certain dog breeds have a propensity for fat. Dogs that were bred for working, like Labradors or Golden Retrievers, northern breeds like Malamutes or Huskies whose ancestors needed the extra layer, and Dachshunds, Beagles, and Shelties are among breeds that were created to be active and do work. When a breed that is bred for work does not do that work anymore, that breed tends to put on the pounds. However, this is no excuse for not trying to help your favorite companion be the healthiest he can be!

Ten Ways You Can Help

1. Long daily walks can help combat excess weight; they're good for you as an owner and they can increase the bond you have with your pet. Playing fetch is also effective.

2. Do not give table scraps or people food. You may be giving more than you realize.

3. Try to decrease food amounts. Start by decreasing by about 10% and decrease by 10% increments if your dog is not losing weight.

4. Treats should be given sparingly. Use lower fat alternatives such as Grain-Free Premium Natural Biscuits or Healthy Chews with Sweet Potatoes.

5. Feed a lower calorie food. Be sure that the food is of a high quality, since your pet will not be getting as many calories.

6. Salt-free canned vegetables, such as string beans, can be used to bulk up the food. If you don't want to spend the extra money on a low sodium product, rinse the vegetables well under running water.

7. If your dog's constitution can tolerate vegetables like broccoli or carrots, they are a good way of getting more bulk into your dog's diet.

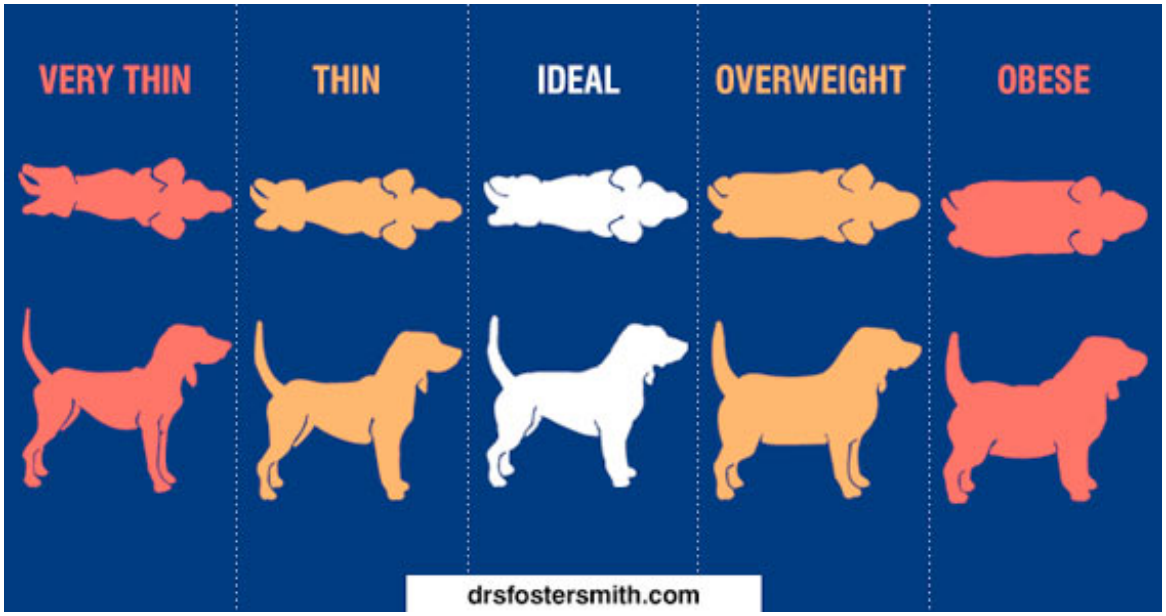
8. Use physical aids like ramps or stairs to assist pets that have trouble accessing automobiles or furniture while you work on introducing healthy activity.

9. Start your pet on a joint support product such as Joint Care 1 Plus before joint issues arise. If your pet already has joint problems, ask your

*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*

veterinarian about prescription options.

10. Make sure your overweight pet has a comfortable bed that provides orthopedic support and elevates your pet off cold, hard floors.



*Unauthorized use of any images, thumbnails, illustrations, descriptions, article content, or registered trademarks of **Foster & Smith, Inc.** is strictly prohibited under copyright law. Site content, including photography, descriptions, pricing, promotions, and availability are subject to change without notice. These restrictions are necessary in order to protect not only our copyrighted intellectual property, but also the health of pets, since articles or images that are altered or edited after download could result in misinformation that may harm companion animals, aquatic life, or native species.*