

Geriatric Exams: What to Expect

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



THE TWICE YEARLY geriatric exam



A twice-yearly checkup can do much to keep up your senior's quality of life. The earlier in the disease process that a diagnosis is made, the earlier treatment can be started and, generally, the better the prognosis. Regular veterinary exams may

also teach you about your pet and what to expect in the coming years.

Geriatric exams are also called "senior wellness programs," "senior care programs," or "geriatric screens." A geriatric exam consists of more than the checkups you are used to, and may include checking your pet's weight (to check for [obesity](#) or unexpected loss of weight) as well as any combination of diagnostic tests. Your pet will also get a full physical examination – your veterinarian will look at your pet from head to tail. At your pet's first geriatric exam, tests will be performed to establish a "baseline" for comparison with your pet's future diagnostic tests.

Some tests might include:

Urinalysis - to see the amount and what your pet may be excreting in his urine

A CBC (complete blood count) - which determines the amount and types of blood cells in your pet's blood and can point to many abnormal conditions

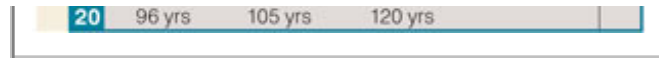
Chemistry panel - which measures levels of various substances such as glucose, proteins, enzymes, and electrolytes in your pet's blood.

When is your dog considered a senior?

The size of the dog plays a large role in determining the relative age of a dog in human years. Remember that these are arbitrary classifications and not set in stone.

relative age of your dog in human years				
weight	0-20 lbs	21-50 lbs	51-90 lbs	Over 90 lbs
age of dog 6	40 yrs	42 yrs	45 yrs	49 yrs
7	44 yrs	47 yrs	50 yrs	56 yrs
8	48 yrs	51 yrs	55 yrs	64 yrs
9	52 yrs	56 yrs	61 yrs	71 yrs
10	56 yrs	60 yrs	66 yrs	78 yrs
11	60 yrs	65 yrs	72 yrs	86 yrs
12	64 yrs	69 yrs	77 yrs	93 yrs
13	68 yrs	74 yrs	82 yrs	101 yrs
14	72 yrs	78 yrs	88 yrs	108 yrs
15	76 yrs	83 yrs	93 yrs	115 yrs
16	80 yrs	87 yrs	99 yrs	123 yrs
17	84 yrs	92 yrs	104 yrs	
18	88 yrs	96 yrs	109 yrs	
19	92 yrs	101 yrs	115 yrs	

This chemistry panel is a valuable tool in identifying diseases such as diabetes mellitus, liver disease, kidney disease, and several hormonal diseases



Other tests - these may include stool tests, radiographs (x-rays) and a heart test called an ECG (electrocardiogram)

Preventive veterinary care can add years and quality of life to your older pet. We recommend twice-yearly checkups for [seniors](#) (see chart to decide when your pet is a senior).

Remember, even if your older pet is healthy, geriatric exams are important not only to catch disease processes, but to help you prepare for the changes your pet will experience as he ages.