

Overweight Checklist

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We are an overweight society and our pets are no different. By far, the most common explanation for an overweight pet is simply too little exercise and too much to eat. But, you see your dog every day - and you might not recognize extra pounds or ounces creeping on. Of course, your veterinarian would be able to determine if your pet is overweight, but it may help if you have some idea of your pet's weight status. Sometimes, when you get used to the way a pet looks day to day, it is difficult to see extra pounds or ounces.

Sometimes owners, in the stress of the moment, forget to tell the veterinarian relevant information about their pets. Here is a handy checklist to bring with you to your next veterinary appointment. If any of these statements describe your dog, make a note to discuss your pet's weight with your veterinarian.

Have your dog stand up and check which symptoms you observe:

1. Observe him from above:

- My dog looks boxy or has a straight line on either side from head to hip with no definite waist behind the ribs.
- The area between his ribs and hips is wider than the rest of his body.

2. Observe him from the side:

- My dog's abdomen has no discernable tuck - his abdomen is in line with his chest.
- My dog has a sagging stomach.

3. Gently run your fingers along your pet's sides:

I cannot feel my dog's ribs.

My dog has a discernable layer of fat over his rib cage.

4. Now feel along your pet's back:

My dog has a definite pad of fat over his tail and I can't feel his backbone.

5. My dog's breed or predominant breed is one that tends to be overweight.

Examples are: Basset Hounds, Labrador or Golden Retrievers, Shetland Sheepdogs, or Dachshunds.

6. My dog does not get at least 20 to 30 minutes of outside exercise daily.

If you and your veterinarian decide your pet is overweight, you can work together on a diet and exercise program to fit your lifestyle as well as your dog's. Make your dog's weight a priority and you will likely help him live a longer and higher quality life.