

August 2020

Exercising with your dog



Exercise helps keep your dog healthy, as well as calm and obedient. It's an opportunity for you to be active too. And as most dog owners know, regular activity burns off excess energy, so the pet won't be excessively hyper around the house.

However, the dog may not be fit enough to adapt to any physical demand. If it's a confined city pet, it won't be accustomed to regular, strenuous activity. Have the dog examined by a veterinarian to be sure it can handle regular exercise.

For inactive pets, gradually introduce them to exercise, in much the same way you did when you began your exercise program. Build up slowly. Start with a 15-minute walk daily. In addition, a dog should reach maturity before going on a long, gruelling run. A puppy's skeleton is still developing and shouldn't be subjected to intense physical stress at each outing. It's recommended small dogs (under 45 lbs.) be about eight months old before they become running partners. Dogs slightly larger (up to 100 pounds) should be over a year old, and dogs over 100 pounds should be at least a year and a half.

Larger dogs are more suited as running companions, while smaller breeds (like Yorkies and Pekingese) are suited for a brisk walking pace. Other heavy or short-legged breeds, or very old dogs, won't be able to handle a vigorous workout or a long-distance trek.

Dogs can't dissipate heat as well as humans; they can't sweat, they can only pant. A dog's signs of exhaustion are excessive panting, salivating and bright pink gums. Drink before leaving

and stop frequently for water on long trips. Carry water (for you and your pet) or run in areas where your dog has access to a water source. Afterward, offer water immediately.

Concrete and asphalt are hard on the paws, especially on hot days. The feet will be very sensitive and calluses should be built up gradually. When you get home, check the paws for embedded stones or debris. All-terrain footwear is available for dogs. Check a pet store or surf the internet.

A dog should understand basic commands before becoming a running partner. Your pet should be properly leash trained before you hit the streets. And keep it leashed to avoid dangerous encounters or traffic mishaps.

Avoid cycling with a dog. You have less control of the pet and leashing a dog to your bike is dangerous for both of you.

Reflective strips on the dog's collar are recommended after dark.

Be considerate: Obey posted signs of rules and where dogs are not allowed – and always clean up after your dog. Others will be grateful!

Eve Lees has been active in the health & fitness industry since 1979. Now retired, she was a Freelance Health Writer for several publications and gave speaking presentations to business and private groups on various health topics. <https://www.artnews-healthnews.com/health-writing>

Visit Eve's [health column archive](#) in the White Rock Sun

Connect on [LinkedIn](#), [Facebook](#) or follow [Eve's Blog](#)