



勝利動物醫院
Victory Animal Hospital

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Obesity in Dogs and Cats

Obesity is the most common *preventable* disease in pets

What is obesity?

Obesity is an accumulation of excess body fat. Extra body weight and extra body fat tend to go hand in hand, so most overweight dogs will have excess body fat.

Body weight is easy to measure when assessing if a pet is overweight or obese – easier than trying to measure body fat. Using body weight as a guide, pets are considered to be overweight when they weigh 10–20% above their ideal body weight. They're considered obese when they weigh 20% or more above their ideal body weight.



What are the risks with obesity?

Excess fat negatively impacts an animal's health and longevity. Large, lifetime study of Labrador retrievers has found that being even moderately overweight can reduce canine life expectancy by nearly two years compared to their leaner counterparts. It is similar with cats.

Obese animals develop an increased risk for:

- cancers of all types, diabetes mellitus, heart disease and hypertension,
- osteoarthritis and a faster degeneration of affected joints,
- urinary bladder stones, and
- anesthetic complications as they're less heat tolerant.

On the other hand, obesity may be an *indicator* of disease, such as hypothyroidism (an underactive thyroid gland) or Cushing's disease (overactive adrenal glands).

The very first step in dealing with an overweight or obese animal is to recognize and acknowledge that there is a problem. Your veterinarian and the veterinary health care team can assist with an assessment.

Our veterinary health care team will provide an estimated ideal body weight to use as a target, but it is important that they also do regular body condition assessments to ensure progress is being made toward normal body weight and body condition. Most veterinary practices use a body condition scoring system on a scale of either 1–5 (3 is normal) or 1–9 (4.5 is normal).



How do I adjust my dog's meals to help him lose weight?

Once you've identified that your dog is overweight or obese, it is important to adjust feedings specifically for weight loss – using a specific nutritional product, a specific portion and a specific meal frequency. There are scientifically formulated nutritional products to help with healthy and safe weight reduction in dogs. It is **not** appropriate to simply reduce the volume of their current food. This will cause malnourishment over time.

Once the new food has been selected and the new portions are determined, it is critical that you be consistent with feeding – portions and meal frequency – and to resist the temptation to provide inappropriate snacks. Fresh or frozen green beans, broccoli, and cauliflower, as well as air-popped popcorn all make excellent snacks if approved by your veterinarian.

Regular weigh-ins, every 2–3 weeks, are an important component of successful weight loss and it keeps everyone accountable – Weight Watchers® has been using this principle for decades. It is important to verify weight loss, to ensure that weight loss is neither too rapid nor excessive, and to determine when enough weight has been lost.

What happens when we reach our weight loss goal?

Once an ideal body weight and condition has been achieved, it is important to maintain. Once again, the veterinary health care team can help you find an appropriate food and portion for weight maintenance.

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