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# Your Little Lap Dog

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Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## Small Mixed Breeds: They're Unique!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend and companion and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like little dogs, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Well suited as a companion dog
- Compact and travels well
- Loving and loyal to her owners
- Excellent watchdog
- Alert, curious, and busy

No dog is perfect, though, and you may have noticed these characteristics, too:

- Difficult to houstrain
- Can be aggressive, fearful, or snappy if not socialized properly
- Has a tendency to bark quite a bit if the behavior is rewarded
- Prone to separation anxiety
- Needs regular exercise and diet regulation to avoid weight gain

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's got her own personality, and you love her for it.

## Your Mixed-Breed Dog's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of him. That's why we'll tell you about the health concerns we'll be discussing with you over the life of your friend.



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Knowing your pal's genetic make-up is an important step you can take to ensure his future health and happiness. Just because your pet looks like a Chihuahua doesn't mean he is a Chihuahua! And even if he is part Chihuahua, it doesn't mean he'll have the same behavioral tendencies or health problems as a Chihuahua. In fact, he could have inherited some of those traits from his parents or grandparents of entirely different breeds. We want to know which breeds your dog is so that we can tell you what to expect in terms of his behavior and health. That's why we recommend genetic testing for all mixed-breed dogs.

This guide, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. We walk you step by step through the health problems that are common in little dogs weighing 20 pounds or less. At the end of booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your dog looking and feeling his best. You'll know what to watch for, and we'll all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

### *Allergies*

Your dog can get "hay fever" just like humans, which is an allergy to pollen, mold, mildew, or dust (called atopy). Your dog will get itchy: usually in the face, feet, and ears, though some dogs are itchy all over. Typically, you'll start seeing signs when your dog is between the ages of two and five, and the problem tends to get worse every year. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for this condition.

### *Back Problems*

Intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) is a common condition in small dogs with long backs and short legs, such as shih tzus and poodles. The disease is caused when the jelly-like cushion between one or more vertebrae slips or ruptures, causing the disc to press on the spinal cord. If your dog is suddenly unable or unwilling to jump up or go up stairs, is reluctant to move around, has a hunched back, cries out, or

refuses to eat or go potty, she is likely in severe pain. If you see signs, don't wait. Call us or an emergency clinic immediately! For less severe cases, rest and medication may resolve the problem. In many cases involving paralysis, we'll recommend surgical removal of the ruptured discs (within 24 hours of the onset of symptoms to get the best results). As with so many other diseases, weight control helps to prevent this problem. You should also use ramps or steps from puppyhood on so that your dog doesn't spend a lifetime stressing her back by jumping on and off of the furniture.

### *Cataracts*

Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older dogs, and in some breeds of small dogs like the Japanese chin and the Boston terrier, we see them at a young age as well. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight is an option.

### *Dental Disease*

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. And, unfortunately, it's especially problematic in small dogs like your friend. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy will lose her teeth and be in danger of damaging her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, the disease may shorten your pet's life by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

### *Eye Injuries*

If your pup has eyeballs that bulge like a Cavalier King Charles spaniel or a pug, he is more vulnerable to eye injuries. The cornea is the clear window at the front of the eye, and it can be damaged by a scrape or puncture, or it can develop an open sore and become infected. Don't let your dog ride in the car with his head out the window; this is a frequent cause of eye injuries. Call us right away if he has any problems with his eyes. A damaged cornea is painful and should be treated immediately. Medication, and sometimes surgery, is required.

### *Glaucoma*

Glaucoma, an eye condition that affects people too, is an extremely painful disease (people say it's like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick!) that rapidly leads to blindness. Some breeds that are more likely to get this disease are Chinese crested dogs, poodles, Chihuahuas, and Maltese. Signs include squinting, watery eyes; cloudiness of the cornea (the clear window at the front of the eye); and redness in the whites of the eyes. We'll perform annual glaucoma screening for your pal to diagnose and treat it as early as possible. Glaucoma is a





medical emergency. If you see signs, don't wait. Call us or an emergency clinic immediately!

### Heart Disease

Heart failure is a leading cause of death in older dogs, and 75% of the heart disease is caused by valve deterioration. Pets with heart valve disease have a heart murmur that can be heard with a stethoscope. If your dog has a heart murmur or physical signs that suggest heart problems, we'll perform diagnostic testing to determine the severity of the disease. We'll repeat those same tests every year or so to monitor the condition. If valve disease is diagnosed early, we may be able to prescribe medications that could prolong her life for many years. Remember that proper dental care and weight control go a long way in preventing heart disease.

### Infections

Small dogs are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as parvovirus, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we'll administer to your dog based on the diseases we see in our area, his age, and other factors.

### Kidney Stones

There are half a dozen different types of stones that can form in the kidney or in the bladder, and some little dogs—like the Bichon frise and the Yorkshire terrier—are more likely to develop them than other breeds. We'll periodically test for the presence of kidney and bladder stones; they are painful! If your buddy has blood in her urine, can't urinate, or is straining to urinate, it is a medical emergency. Call us immediately!

### Knee Problems

Sometimes a little dog's kneecap will slip out of place (called patellar luxation). You might notice that he runs along and suddenly picks up a back leg and skips or hops

for a few strides. English toy spaniels, toy fox terriers, pugs, poodles, Chihuahuas, Pomeranians, shih tzus, Yorkies, and Boston terriers are a few of the breeds that are more likely to suffer from this condition. If the problem is mild and involves only one leg, your pal may not require much treatment beyond arthritis medication. When symptoms are severe, surgery is needed to realign the kneecap to keep it from popping out of place. Rehabilitation and special exercises can be very helpful.

### Liver Problems

Small dogs—especially toy breeds and dogs mixed with schnauzer, shih tzu, and Maltese—are more likely than other dogs to have a liver disorder called portosystemic shunt. To test for this problem, we'll conduct a liver function test in addition to a standard pre-anesthetic panel every time your dog goes under anesthesia. If she shows signs of having this disease, we'll test her blood and conduct an ultrasound scan of her liver and bladder. We may recommend surgery, but it's more likely that we'll treat your friend with a special diet and medication.

### Obesity

Obesity is a significant health problem in dogs and a serious disease that may cause arthritis, some types of cancer, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when he looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can love him to death with human food and treats.

### Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your dog's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas to ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in any number of ways: drinking unclean water, eating or stepping on feces, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventative medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

### Spaying or Neutering

One of the best things you can do for your pup is to have him neutered (called spaying in females). In males, this means we surgically remove the testicles, and in females, it means we surgically remove the uterus and ovaries. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to evaluate and possibly address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop.

## Taking Care of Your

## Little Dog at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch his diet, make sure he gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush his teeth, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for him. This is when we’ll give him the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in small breeds. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures he will need throughout his life, and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

### *Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise*

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your pal live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight dogs are more prone to cancer, back pain, heart disease, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Little dogs have serious problems with their teeth, so you’ll need to brush them at least three times a week!
- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent, and don’t give her people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, and don’t overdo exercise.

### *What to Watch For*

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs:

- ✓ Vomiting or chronic diarrhea
- ✓ Weight loss or weight gain
- ✓ Lumps, bumps, and moles
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Limping or lameness
- ✓ Hair loss
- ✓ Coughing or difficulty breathing
- ✓ Episodes of weakness
- ✓ Pot-belly appearance
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching or licking)
- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, or discharge in the ear
- ✓ Hopping or skipping while running
- ✓ Unwillingness to jump up or go up stairs

## Partners in Health Care

DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being

developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit [www.Genesis4Pets.com](http://www.Genesis4Pets.com).

Your dog counts on you to take good care of him, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that he lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to ensure that your pal has the best health care possible: health care that’s based on his size, lifestyle, and age. And remember, we can help you manage your dog’s health more effectively once we’ve identified his breeds through genetic testing. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns

## Health Evaluation Schedule for Small Dogs

Now that you’ve read about the health issues we’ll be monitoring, we wanted to give you an at-a-glance summary of what services we’ll provide to keep your little one happy and healthy. It may seem like your pet is prone to quite a few problems, but don’t worry; we’ll take the lead in keeping her healthy for a lifetime. We’ll review these health-care steps with you in more detail, but please feel free to ask questions or voice concerns at any time.

*Studies to determine the frequency of inheritance or disease in mixed breeds either have not been completed or are inconclusive. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we’ve described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in small mixed-breed dogs.*





# How We'll Keep Your Dog Healthy

*Puppy to Adolescent:  
Infant to 17 in People Years*

	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Small Mixed-Breed-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	<input type="radio"/>	6–8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Internal parasite test and/or deworming Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Heart murmurs Hernias Proper dental alignment Parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	10–12 weeks	Brief physical examination Heartworm prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth at home	Proper growth rate Behavioral problems Parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	14–16 weeks	Brief physical examination Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming Schedule spay/neuter surgery	Adult teeth coming in properly Skin infections Tonsillitis Parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Knee evaluation Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Liver function Genetic testing	Knee problems Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Liver disease Breed composition
	<input type="radio"/>	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Knee evaluation Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Excessive weight gain Behavioral problems Knee problems Heartworms and other parasites
<i>Adult: 18 to 39 in People Years</i>	<input type="radio"/>	2 years through 6 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Knee evaluation Internal organ health evaluation Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Back pain Cataracts Knee evaluation Internal organ health and function Kidney or bladder stones Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
<i>Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years</i>	<input type="radio"/>	7 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Senior internal organ health evaluation Glaucoma screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Back pain Cataracts Internal organ health and function Kidney or bladder stones Glaucoma Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
<i>Senior: 60+ in People Years</i>	<input type="radio"/>	10 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Glaucoma screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Healthy weight Back pain Cataracts Arthritis Internal organ health and function Kidney or bladder stones Signs of cancer Glaucoma Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.