

# Your **Siberian Husky**

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## **Siberian Huskies: What a Unique Breed!**

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 Siberian huskies, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Rugged and strong, with great endurance
- Well suited as a companion or working dog
- Adaptable to a wide variety of living conditions
- Quiet—not a barker
- Friendly with strangers
- Playful and energetic

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

- Needs lots of exercise and mental stimulation
- Prone to boredom and separation anxiety, with associated chewing and howling behaviors
- Doesn't adapt well to heat
- Has a tendency to escape, wander, and roam
- Can be willful and difficult to train
- Sheds quite a bit
- Strong prey drive—will chase and grab things that run, including cats and children

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

  
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## Your Siberian Husky'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 husky.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they're related to your pet's breed. That doesn't mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that he's more at risk than other dogs. We'll describe the most common issues for Siberian huskies to give you an idea of what may come up. Of course we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of the booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your husky 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.

### *Arthritis*

Ninety percent of older dogs have arthritis, and bigger dogs tend to have more pain and disability than smaller dogs. Your Siberian is particularly prone to develop arthritis, for which we have many treatments. The earlier we begin treatment, the more active and comfortable your dog will be as she gets older. Do not let your dog become overweight; this puts a huge strain on the joints. Good nutrition and proper exercise are also very important to help reduce bone and joint problems as a pet gets older.

### *Cancer*

Cancer is the most common cause of death of dogs in their golden years, and your husky is especially prone to certain kinds of cancer, including basal cell tumors, sebaceous

gland tumors, anal gland tumors, and hemangiopericytomas. Whew, that's a mouthful! Half of all cancers are cured by surgically removing them, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll do periodic blood tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet. If your husky is overweight, we'll discuss exercise and diet because obesity is a risk factor for some types of cancer.

### *Cataracts*

Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in many breeds as they get older, but Siberian huskies are predisposed to develop a mild form of them when they're six to 18 months old. 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.

### *Degenerative Myelopathy*

This neurologic condition causes weakness and poor nerve function in the hind legs. It affects Siberian huskies more frequently than other breeds. If your dog has this disease, she will become more and more weak and disabled in the hind legs and will eventually suffer from paralysis of her hindquarters, along with incontinence. Rehabilitation, exercise, and dietary supplements can be helpful, but there is no cure. There is a DNA test available for this disease, which helps us diagnose and treat it much earlier in your pet's life.

### *Dental Disease*

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean. It's also important to prevent broken or damaged teeth by avoiding certain kinds of toys and treats, including chew hooves, tennis balls, bones, and ice cubes.

### *Dry Eye*

Dry eye, also known as keratoconjunctivitis sicca or KCS, is a disease common in Siberian huskies. The tear glands no longer produce enough tears to keep the eye moist, which results in eye sores and infections. Ouch! Symptoms include a thick discharge, squinting, pawing at the eye, or a dull, dry look instead of a glistening, shiny eye. This is a painful condition; please call us immediately if you notice any of these signs. We'll conduct a tear test each year and, if he has this disease, we'll prescribe ointment that you'll need to apply for the rest of your dog's life.



### *Epilepsy*

Your husky is prone to seizures, usually beginning between six months and three years of age. Medications will usually keep seizures under control.

### *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. Symptoms 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. In severe cases, her eye may look swollen or like it's bulging. Huskies tend to develop this condition when they're one to two years old, so we'll perform annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and treat it as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms, don't wait. Call us or an emergency clinic immediately!

### *High Blood Pressure*

Siberian huskies are more likely than other dogs to have high blood pressure (also called hypertension), which may or may not be caused by another disease. High blood pressure can cause blindness and strokes in dogs, just as it can in people. We'll test your friend's blood pressure every time he visits and prescribe blood pressure medication as needed.

### *Infections*

Siberians 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, her age, and other factors.

### *Laryngeal Paralysis*

Your older husky may develop this disease, in which the vocal cords become paralyzed and hang down into the airway. Watch for noisy breathing, especially when exercising or in hot, humid weather. Bring your dog in right away if you notice signs; don't wait until the necessary corrective surgery becomes an emergency!

### *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.

### *Skin Infections*

Your Siberian is prone to a form of skin infection called zinc-responsive dermatosis, in which he either isn't getting enough zinc in his diet or he doesn't absorb it properly. Signs include red, hairless, crusting, scaling or oozing skin around the mouth, chin, eyes, and ears or lesions on the foot pads and nose. If your dog develops either type, we'll prescribe a carefully regulated amount of zinc in the diet.

### *Spaying or Neutering*

One of the best things you can do for your Siberian husky is to have her spayed (called neutering in males). 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. This is convenient for you and easy for your friend. Don't worry; we'll let you know what specific problems we'll look for when the time arrives.

## Taking Care of Your Siberian Husky 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 coat, 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 Siberian huskies. 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 Siberian husky live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight huskies are more prone to cancer, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Brush her coat at least weekly.
- ✓ Brush her teeth 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.
- ✓ Don’t let your dog chew on bones, ice cubes, hooves, or tennis balls.

### *What to Watch For*

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs in your Siberian husky:

- ✓ 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

Your Siberian Husky

## 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 Siberian husky 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 breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns.

## Health Evaluation Schedule for Siberian Huskies

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 Siberian husky 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 this breed 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 this breed.*



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# How We'll Keep Your Siberian Husky Healthy

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

*Adult: 18 to 39  
in People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59  
in People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59  
in People Years*

| (✓) | Age                     | Services We'll Provide   | Siberian Husky-Specific Problems We're Looking For   |
|-----|-------------------------|--|--|
| ○   | 6–8 weeks               | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Internal parasite test and/or deworming<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care   | Heart murmurs<br>Hernias<br>Proper dental alignment<br>Parasites   |
| ○   | 10–12 weeks             | Brief physical examination<br>Heartworm prevention<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss caring for your dog's teeth at home  | Proper growth rate<br>Behavioral problems<br>Parasites   |
| ○   | 14–16 weeks             | Brief physical examination<br>Internal parasite check<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming<br>Schedule spay/neuter surgery   | Adult teeth coming in properly<br>Skin infections<br>Tonsillitis<br>Parasites  |
| ○   | 4–6 months              | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery  | Cataracts<br>High blood pressure<br>Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery   |
| ○   | 1 year                  | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Blood pressure check<br>Glaucoma screen<br>Heartworm test<br>Internal parasite check<br>Vaccinations<br>Discuss diet, weight, and exercise  | Cataracts<br>Skin infections<br>Excessive weight gain<br>Behavioral problems<br>High blood pressure<br>Glaucoma<br>Heartworms and other parasites  |
| ○   | 2 years through 6 years | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Blood pressure check<br>Internal organ health evaluation<br>Tear test<br>Glaucoma screen<br>Internal parasite check<br>Heartworm test<br>Vaccinations   | Skin infections<br>Dental disease<br>Healthy weight<br>High blood pressure<br>Internal organ health and function<br>Dry eye<br>Glaucoma<br>Heartworms and other parasites  |
| ○   | 7 years through 9 years | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Blood pressure check<br>Senior internal organ health evaluation<br>DNA test for degenerative myelopathy if pet has hind leg weakness<br>Tear test<br>Heart health check<br>Internal parasite check<br>Heartworm test<br>Vaccinations                        | Skin infections<br>Dental disease<br>Healthy weight<br>Arthritis<br>High blood pressure<br>Internal organ health and function<br>Degenerative myelopathy<br>Dry eye<br>Heart disease<br>Heartworms and other parasites   |
| ○   | 10 years and older      | Head-to-tail physical examination<br>Blood pressure check<br>Golden years internal organ health evaluation<br>DNA test for degenerative myelopathy if pet has hind leg weakness<br>Cancer screen<br>Tear test<br>Heart health check<br>Internal parasite check<br>Heartworm test<br>Vaccinations | Skin infections<br>Dental disease<br>Healthy weight<br>Arthritis<br>Laryngeal paralysis<br>High blood pressure<br>Internal organ health and function<br>Degenerative myelopathy<br>Signs of cancer<br>Dry eye<br>Heart disease<br>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.