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# Your Golden Retriever

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Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## Golden Retrievers: 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 golden retrievers, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Even-tempered, affectionate, and happy-go-lucky
- Good with kids and other pets
- Large, strong, and athletic
- Eager to please and responsive to training

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

- Sheds quite a bit and needs to be brushed regularly
- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Needs a lot of exercise and mental stimulation
- Is a bit "mouthy"—likes to carry and chew things

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

## Your Golden Retriever'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 golden retriever.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they're related to your pet's breed. That



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### *Ear Infections*

Golden retrievers often get ear infections, which are painful and annoying. The earlier we catch this, the less discomfort and pain he suffers. Be sure to call us if you notice that he is scratching or shaking his head, there is a foul odor about the ears, or his ears seem painful to the touch. We'll pay special attention to his ears each time we see him. No one likes an earache!

### *Eating Weird Stuff*

Golden retrievers eat things they're not supposed to—rocks, coins, plants, and socks, among others. Your pet carries the item in her mouth to check it out or play with it, or she thinks it's food. When swallowed, these objects often get stuck and have to be surgically removed. Some of what your dog eats is toxic and can poison her. If you notice that she is vomiting and/or acting lethargic, call us immediately.

### *Eye Problems*

Golden retrievers can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, including eyelashes that grow abnormally, cataracts, and abnormalities in their retinas. In other words, your golden's eyes can cause him all kinds of problems, and they can be painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination.

### *Heart Disease*

Some golden retrievers inherit a heart condition commonly known as aortic stenosis. This disease causes a partial obstruction of blood flow in the heart, which means the heart must work harder to pump enough blood. If the condition is severe enough, your dog may faint or just seem to run out of energy during exercise. She may also have difficulty breathing, cough, or not grow as much as she should. We'll test for this disease during your dog's life and discuss treatment options with you if she has the condition.

### *Hip and Elbow Dysplasia*

You've probably heard of this inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis, but did you know that it can also be a problem in a golden retriever's elbows? You may notice that he has lameness in his front legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to avoid discomfort and pain. We'll take X-rays of your dog's bones to identify the disease as early as possible. Surgery is sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. Keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis two years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering.

### *Infections*

In addition to ear infections, golden retrievers are

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 golden retrievers 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, along with the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of this booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your golden retriever 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*

Golden retrievers can get "hay fever" or food allergies, just like humans. Symptoms may include itchy skin, recurrent ear infections, and chronic vomiting or diarrhea. The good news is that there are many treatment options available to treat allergies, from special diets to medications.

### *Cancer*

Cancer is the most common cause of death of pets over age twelve, and your golden is especially prone to lymphoma, melanoma, and hemangiosarcoma. Early detection is critical! We'll do periodic blood tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine her. If she is overweight, we'll discuss exercise and diet because obesity is a risk factor for some types of cancer.

### *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.





susceptible to other 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.

### *Joint Disease*

When golden retriever puppies are allowed to grow too quickly, the cartilage in their joints may not attach to the bone properly. It's best to stick to our recommended growth rate of no more than four pounds per week to avoid this condition. In addition, as he gets older, your golden is more likely than other breeds to get ligament tears. Surgery may be required to fix either of these problems. Keeping him at the right weight, feeding a high-quality diet, and avoiding too much jumping (like playing Frisbee) are the keys to avoiding a ligament tear.

### *Kidney Disease*

Goldens are prone to renal dysplasia, a genetic form of kidney disease, and it can affect your dog as early as puppyhood. Signs include excessive drinking of water and urine production; poor appetite or weight loss; and eventually vomiting and diarrhea. If your dog shows signs of this disease, we'll perform diagnostic tests to be sure. Treatment may include medication, fluid therapy, and a special diet.

### *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 she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can love her 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 his skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into his 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 him healthy.

### *Spaying or Neutering*

One of the best things you can do for your golden 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 retriever 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.

### *Thyroid Problems*

Golden retrievers are prone to a common condition in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs may include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, lethargy, mental dullness, sleeping excessively, fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood screening test annually to look for the disease. Treatment is usually simple—replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

## **Taking Care of Your Golden Retriever 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 her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call the veterinarian 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 her. This is when we'll give her the necessary "check-ups" and test for diseases and conditions that are common in golden retrievers.

### *Routine Care*

Build his routine care into your schedule to help your retriever live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during his lifetime! Another very important step 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.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep him out of trouble and away from things he shouldn't put in her mouth.
- ✓ Brush his coat at least weekly.
- ✓ Brush his teeth at least three times a week.
- ✓ Clean his ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!

### *Diet and Exercise*

Watch her diet, and make sure she gets regular exercise. Overweight golden retrievers are more prone to cancer, hip dysplasia, ligament tears, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ 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, chew hooves, or tennis balls.

### *What to Watch For*

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs in your golden retriever:

- ✓ 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, discharge in the ear, or a foul odor about the ear

## 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 golden retriever 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 Golden Retrievers

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 golden happy and healthy. It may seem like your retriever is prone to quite a few problems, but don't worry; we'll take the lead in keeping him 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.*



# How We'll Keep Your Golden Retriever 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	Golden Retriever-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	Eye abnormalities 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 and ears at home	Heart murmurs Allergies and ear infections Eye abnormalities Proper growth rate Behavioral problems Parasites
<input type="radio"/>	14–16 weeks	Brief physical examination Hip and elbow evaluation Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming Schedule spay/neuter surgery	Heart murmurs Allergies and ear infections Eye abnormalities Adult teeth coming in properly Skin infection Tonsillitis Hip and elbow dysplasia Parasites
<input type="radio"/>	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Hip and elbow evaluation	Joint disease Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Hip and elbow dysplasia
<input type="radio"/>	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip and elbow evaluation Internal organ health evaluation Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Joint disease Excessive weight gain Allergies and ear infections Behavioral problems Hip and elbow dysplasia Kidney disease Heartworms and other parasites
<input type="radio"/>	2 years through 6 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip and elbow evaluation Internal organ health evaluation Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Allergies and ear infections Eye abnormalities Healthy weight Hip and elbow dysplasia Internal organ health and function Kidney disease Heartworms and other parasites
<input type="radio"/>	7 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Senior internal organ health evaluation Hip and elbow evaluation Cancer screen Heart health check Thyroid testing Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Allergies and ear infections Eye abnormalities Healthy weight Arthritis Internal organ health Kidney disease Hip and elbow dysplasia Signs of cancer Heart disease Thyroid function Heartworms and other parasites
<input type="radio"/>	10 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Heart health check Thyroid testing Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Allergies and ear infections Eye abnormalities Healthy weight Arthritis Internal organ health Kidney disease Signs of cancer Heart disease Thyroid function 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.