

Your Maltese

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



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

- Trusting and affectionate
- Compact; does well in small living quarters
- Gentle-mannered and easy to get along with
- Highly intelligent, playful, and energetic
- Confident, steady, and fearless
- Wonderful companion and family dog
- Hypoallergenic coat sheds very little
- Good around other pets and dogs

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

- Coat needs to be cared for frequently to prevent matting and tear staining
- Can be snappy around children if not socialized properly
- Difficult to housetrain
- Has a tendency to bark quite a bit if not trained out of this habit
- Fragile because of her small size
- Prone to separation anxiety and associated barking and chewing behaviors

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



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Your Maltese'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 Maltese.

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 Maltese 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 Maltese 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.

Cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Maltese will live longer than many other breeds and is likely to get cancer in her golden years. Half of all cancers are cured by surgically removing them, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet. 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. And unfortunately, your Maltese is much more likely to develop this problem than other breeds. 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 his teeth and be in danger of damaging his kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, the disease could 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.

Fluid Build-up in the Skull

Water on the brain, or hydrocephalus, occurs when fluid builds up inside the skull and puts pressure on the brain tissue. This condition is most common in breeds with dome-shaped heads, like your Maltese. It is often present when the skull bones don't fuse properly. Signs include seizures, difficulty training the puppy, dulled mental function, circling, and a spastic gait. It is usually diagnosed early in life, but occasionally we diagnose it in adult dogs. We'll do testing if symptoms develop. Sometimes surgery can alleviate the problem.

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, the eye may look swollen or like it's bulging. 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 symptoms, don't wait. Call us or an emergency clinic immediately!



Heart Disease

Heart failure is a common cause of death of Maltese in their golden years, and 75% of the heart disease is caused by valve deterioration. A valve that regulates blood flow slowly becomes deformed so that it no longer closes tightly. Blood then leaks back around the valve and strains the heart. Pets with heart valve disease (sometimes called mitral 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

Maltese 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.

Mats and Hot Spots

Because she has that long, silky fur, your Maltese requires a lot of brushing and skin care. Mats and tangles can lead to skin infections, particularly moist, painful skin lesions called hot spots. Brush your pet at least every two or three days and keep an eye out for sores, especially in hot, humid weather. Keep the area around her eyes clean and dry with a warm, moist cloth and taking her to the groomer often.

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 Maltese 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 Maltese 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 Maltese 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 Maltese. 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 Maltese live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight Maltese are more prone to cancer, heart disease, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Brush her coat at least three times a week.
- ✓ Maltese 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 in your Maltese:

- ✓ 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 Maltese

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.

Your Maltese 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 Maltese

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 Maltese 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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Winter Park Veterinary Hospitals

How We'll Keep Your Maltese 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 | Maltese-Specific Problems We're Looking For |
|--|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|---|
| <i>Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in People Years</i> | <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 | Abnormal skull formation 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 Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery | Mats and hot spots Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery |
| | <input type="radio"/> | 1 year | Head-to-tail physical examination Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise | Mats and hot spots Excessive weight gain Behavioral problems Heartworms and other parasites |
| <i>Adult: 18 to 39 in People Years</i> | <input type="radio"/> | 2 years through 8 years | Head-to-tail physical examination Internal organ health evaluation Glaucoma screen starting at age 6 Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations | Dental disease Mats and hot spots Healthy weight Internal organ health and function Glaucoma Heartworms and other parasites |
| <i>Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years</i> | <input type="radio"/> | 9 years through 11 years | Head-to-tail physical examination Senior internal organ health evaluation Glaucoma screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations | Dental disease Mats and hot spots Healthy weight Internal organ health and function Glaucoma Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites |
| <i>Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years</i> | <input type="radio"/> | 12 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 Mats and hot spots Healthy weight Arthritis Internal organ health and function 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.