

**Puppy**

FEEDING LARGE AND GIANT BREED PUPPIES

Growing puppies have higher energy demands than adult dogs. Puppies up to 4 months of age require around twice the amount of energy per unit of body weight as an adult dog of the same breed.



As puppies grow, their energy demands begin to decrease. With large and giant breeds (expected adult weight of >45 kg [100 lbs.] assuming the dog has an ideal body condition score) who achieve their adult weight much later (up to 24 months of age), the objective is to feed to ensure a relatively slow and steady rate of growth. Rapid growth rates can stress developing bones and joints resulting in skeletal malformations.

There is wide variation in caloric requirements among dogs. Pets should be fed as individuals to maintain normal growth and a lean, healthy body condition. Plump, heavy puppies are not healthy puppies. The puppy's body condition (using the Purina Body Condition System) and weight should be continually monitored at home and at regular veterinary appointments.

Key Messages**What to feed?**

- Puppies should be fed a complete and balanced growth diet until they reach full skeletal maturity. Large and giant breeds reach adult weight at approximately 18 to 24 months. Adult maintenance diets are not recommended for puppies, but a diet labeled for “all life stages” can be fed.
- Complete and balanced diets contain all the nutrients – including the important minerals – in the correct quantities and balance and thus no supplementation is required.
- Excesses of certain nutrients, such as calcium, can be detrimental to growing puppies, potentially causing skeletal malformations.

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Key Messages (continued)

What to feed?

- Feeding wet or dry food is the owner's preference:
 - Dry foods are more calorie-dense, and a smaller quantity of food needs to be fed compared to wet foods which may be an important decision when feeding large and giant breeds.
 - Dry foods may help with dental health because they are abrasive and help to remove plaque.
- Fresh water should be freely available to the puppy.

When to feed?

- Portion-controlled feeding is preferred for large and giant breed puppies:
 - Helps avoid excessively fast growth and the subsequent risk for skeletal diseases.
 - Aids in house-training, as puppies naturally need to defecate shortly after eating.
- Ideally, provide up to 4 meals per day until the puppy is 6 months of age.
- By 6 months of age, 2 meals per day is adequate.

How to feed?

- Consult the feeding guidelines on the pet food package.
- Use a standard 8-oz. or 250-ml measuring cup OR the most accurate method is to weigh the food using a kitchen scale.
- Daily caloric intake = total daily food + treats/table scraps/food used for administering medications/training treats, etc.
- Growing puppies should be fed as individuals (each provided with their own dish) and in a quiet area with no distractions or competition.
- Puppies should be given about 30 minutes to consume their meal, and any leftovers should be removed.

Additional Resources

Case, L. P., Daristotle, L., Hayek, M. G., & Raasch, M. F. (2011). *Canine and feline nutrition* (3rd ed.). Mosby. doi: 10.1016/B978-0-323-06619-8.10025-8

Linder, D. E. (2017). Diets for each life stage. Cliniciansbrief.com

Eisner, E. R. (2003, July 13). Professional and home dental care of the adult dog and cat. In *Recent advances in dental health management* [Symposium]. *Proceedings of the 8th World Veterinary Dental Congress*. Kyoto, Japan, 8–15.

Lawler, D. F. (2008). Neonatal and pediatric care of the puppy and kitten. *Theriogenology*, 70, 384-392.

The Purina Institute aims to help put nutrition at the forefront of pet health discussions by providing user-friendly, science-based information that helps pets live longer, healthier lives.