

5 Tips for Choosing Puppy Food

<http://www.petmd.com/dog/centers/nutrition/slideshows/tips-for-choosing-puppy-food#.UsgJC9JDuSo>

1. Choose the Puppy Food Brand Wisely

You want a puppy food from a pet food company that has undergone AAFCO feeding trials. This means that the specific formulation of the diet has been fed to dogs to make sure there are no deficiencies. Many pet food companies formulate their food based on a recipe and never feed it to actual dogs before sending it to the pet stores. The better pet food companies invest in scientific research and consult with veterinary nutritionists to provide a food that is completely balanced without any imbalances in nutrients that may be harmful for your puppy's development.

2. Be Mindful of the Calories

Puppy food should be higher in calories than adult food to compensate for how much energy puppies expend by growing, not to mention all that playing. About half of the calories they consume are spent on tissue growth and development. It is important that the amount of food they are eating provides an adequate amount of nutrients to help them develop properly.

3. Puppy Size Matters, and So Does the Size of the Puppy Food

Choose a food that is specifically formulated for the size of your puppy. Look for diets labeled for "Growth" or "All Life Stages." The bone growth for a Chihuahua puppy and a Great Dane puppy is very different and they should not be fed the same food. Large breed puppy food has a specific ratio of calcium and phosphorus to ensure the bones develop properly to help prevent joint disease. Any dog whom we expect to exceed 50 pounds should be on a food specifically labeled for "Large Breed" dogs. A diet designed for the size of your puppy is also important when it comes to the actual kibble size. A tiny Yorkie puppy may have difficulty with larger size pieces of food, so look for a toy or small breed puppy formula to help with this.

4. Check the Puppy Food Ingredients

The ingredients in your puppy's food (and how they are balanced) are vital to the development of your puppy. For instance, a puppy's nervous system is dependent on the essential fatty acid DHA. Puppy diets should have a higher amount of this than foods meant for adult dogs to make sure the brain, eyes, and ears all develop properly. Studies have shown that puppies fed diets high in DHA have increased memory and trainability.

5. Keep Your Puppy Trim & Healthy

Keeping your puppy at a healthy weight is important to lifelong health. Underweight puppies may not develop properly while puppies that are overweight are at increased risk of being overweight adult dogs. This can lead to diseases such as arthritis, high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes and heat exhaustion. Your veterinarian should evaluate your puppy's body condition score at each visit to make sure you are on track with nutrition.



Shiloh Animal Hospital

Foods That Meet our Criteria:

Blue Buffalo	Nature's Variety
Bil-Jac	Purina Pro Plan
Nature's Logic	Evo
Innova	Royal Canin

OTHER THOUGHTS:

Raw? It is Shiloh Animal Hospital's policy that raw diets do not provide any more or less nutritional benefit as long as the diet is complete and balanced. If you would like to feed your pet raw food, we only recommend diets that have been manufactured and formulated AAFCO standards, or else have been formulated by a veterinary nutritionist. Please know that the larger concerns are regarding human safety and the risks of raw foods also apply, specifically with regards to the diseases and pathogens that can be present if all food is not consumed and if bowls are not sanitized appropriately. Please discuss this with us further if you have additional questions/concerns.

Homemade? Homemade diets are recommended for patients who have specific food allergy or intolerance issues, or if the owners prefer to cook the food themselves. However, it is incredibly important that your pet still receive complete and balanced nutrition. This can only be satisfied with a formal recipe formulated by a veterinary nutritionist as over-the-counter vitamins and supplements are not enough. If you would to pursue this, please schedule a consultation to discuss this further at your earliest convenience.

Terms like Natural, Holistic, Premium, and Human Grade? Many of the terms used to describe pet foods on labels and in advertising materials are not legally defined. For example, there is no regulatory meaning for the terms holistic, premium, ultra- or super-premium, gourmet, or human grade. The term "human grade" in particular is used frequently; however, there is no official definition and pet foods are manufactured under FDA authority and not subject to USDA inspection as are human foods. Interpretation and use of the term is variable and the definition is therefore dependent on the philosophy and marketing strategies of the individual manufacturer. (per <http://www.acvn.org/about-us/faq/>)

When to Switch from Puppy Food? We recommend switching your puppy to adult food at no later than 6 months of age, and could be as early as 3 months based on veterinary recommendations. Keeping them on puppy food for too long can cause abnormal growth or lead to overweight pets. Please let us know if you have questions.

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