



CANINE LIFE STAGE HEALTH CHECKLIST

PUPPY:

FROM BIRTH THROUGH CESSATION OF RAPID GROWTH (~6 TO 9 MONTHS OF AGE, VARYING WITH BREED AND SIZE)

General (PE and Consultation)

- Evaluate congenital disorders.
- Recommend microchip/permanent identification.
- Discuss future exam frequency (every 3 to 4 weeks).

Pet Lifestyle and Safety Risk Assessment

- Discuss increased awareness of hazards at this age (e.g., plants, puppy-proofing, foreign body ingestion).

Zoonoses and Human Safety

Covered in the “All Stages” section.

Behavior

- Recommend owners begin socializing and handling from neonate.
- Educate on sensitive periods.
- Identify red flags that need further treatment.
- Educate on selecting appropriate trainers.
- Address desensitization and grooming needs.
- Discuss bite inhibition.
- Discuss the benefits of crate training relative to housetraining, safety, and comfort.
- Encourage appropriate socialization based on the individual.

Nutrition

- Evaluate breed and size for targeted nutrition.
- Discuss establishing a feeding schedule and good feeding and watering habits.

Parasitology

- Discuss parasite prevalence in puppies and zoonotic potential.
- Recommend early deworming beginning at 2 weeks of age and repeating every 2 weeks until started on year-round parasite control.
- Discuss high prevalence of intestinal parasites in puppies. Perform more frequent fecal examinations during the first year of life.
- Start on heartworm preventive as early as label allows (usually 4–8 weeks of age).
- Start on flea and tick control as early as label allows (usually 6–8 weeks of age).

Vaccinations

- Recommend core and noncore (if indicated) vaccines finishing at 16–20 weeks.
- Consider antibody titer testing for the purpose of determining protection from infection from canine distemper virus, canine parvovirus, and canine adenovirus-2.

Dentistry

- Evaluate deciduous dentition, persistent deciduous teeth, extra or incomplete dentition, oral development, and occlusion.
- Discuss acceptable chew toys for dental health and safety.
- Evaluate developmental anomalies and permanent dentition.
- Inform that home oral hygiene training can be started in puppies with erupted, permanent dentition. Juvenile patients actively exfoliating deciduous teeth may experience discomfort associated with home dental care efforts and negative experiences should be avoided.

Reproduction

- Discuss spay/neuter or breeder planning/consult.
- Review literature about advances in temporary contraceptive techniques.
- Examine for tattoo or place tattoo after spaying.
- For intact animals, discuss the hazards of roaming, appropriate breeding frequency, genetic counseling, and breeding ages (start and finish). Consider Brucellosis testing. Evaluate reproductive health, including prostate, testes, and mammary glands. Obtain history of female dog heat cycles.

Breed-Specific Screening

- Discuss inherited disorders for all dogs in which breeding is being considered.
- Educate new owner on breed-related considerations. Screen for abnormalities of dentition, portosystemic shunts, and the orthopedic, respiratory, and cardiovascular systems.

