

New Puppy Owners' Information Sheet

Do's and Don'ts for Socialization and Wellness Care

Socialization

Do's:

- **Start Early:** Begin socializing your puppy as early as 8–12 weeks old. The early socialization period is crucial for shaping a confident, well-adjusted adult dog.
- **Expose to Different Environments:** Gently introduce your puppy to various environments, such as parks, pet stores, and city streets. This helps them become comfortable in different settings.
- **Meet New People and Pets:** Safely introduce your puppy to different people, including children and adults, as well as other dogs and pets. Positive, calm interactions are key.
- **Use Positive Reinforcement:** Reward your puppy with treats, praise, and play when they encounter new experiences or behave calmly in social situations.
- **Observe Body Language:** Pay attention to your puppy's body language to ensure they feel safe and not overwhelmed. Always provide breaks when needed.

Don'ts:

- **Force Interactions:** Never force your puppy into situations where they feel scared or overwhelmed. Gradual exposure is best.
 - **Overwhelm Them:** Limit the number of new experiences or social encounters in a single day. Too much can cause stress and fear.
 - **Ignore Fear Signals:** If your puppy shows signs of fear (tail tucked, trembling, hiding), allow them to retreat to a safe space. Gradually reintroduce them to the situation.
 - **Allow Poor Behavior:** If your puppy reacts aggressively or fearfully towards other dogs or people, address it early with the help of a trainer.
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Wellness

Do's:

- **Provide a Balanced Diet:** Feed your puppy a high-quality, breed-appropriate puppy food. Consult your vet for the right portion sizes and feeding schedule.
- **Offer Fresh Water:** Ensure your puppy always has access to fresh water to stay hydrated.
- **Exercise Regularly:** Puppies need plenty of playtime and physical activity to burn energy. Tailor the exercise to their age, size, and breed.
- **Mental Stimulation:** Engage your puppy's mind with puzzle toys, training sessions, and new experiences. Mental stimulation helps prevent boredom and destructive behaviors.
- **Establish a Routine:** A consistent schedule for feeding, potty breaks, playtime, and naps helps your puppy feel secure and learn good habits.

Don'ts:

- **Overexert Your Puppy:** Too much physical activity can strain your puppy's growing joints and bones. Keep exercise gentle and age-appropriate.
 - **Skip Puppy-Proofing Your Home:** Puppies are naturally curious and might chew on harmful objects. Keep dangerous items out of reach.
 - **Ignore Grooming Needs:** Even puppies need regular grooming. Brush their coat, trim nails, and clean their ears to prevent discomfort or infection.
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Preventative Veterinary Care

Do's:

- **Schedule Regular Vet Visits:** Take your puppy to the vet for regular check-ups. These visits are essential for monitoring their growth, development, and overall health.
- **Vaccinations:** Ensure your puppy receives the recommended vaccinations on time to protect them from common, contagious diseases.
- **Parasite Prevention:** Start your puppy on a flea, tick, and heartworm prevention regimen. Ask your vet about the best options for your area.
- **Microchip and ID:** Get your puppy microchipped and ensure they have a collar with an ID tag containing your current contact information.
- **Spay/Neuter:** Discuss the appropriate time to spay or neuter your puppy with your veterinarian. This is essential for health and behavior.

Don'ts:

- **Delay Vaccinations:** Don't wait to vaccinate your puppy. Missing vaccines can leave your puppy vulnerable to serious diseases.
 - **Skip Preventative Medications:** Don't neglect flea, tick, and heartworm prevention. These pests can lead to serious health problems.
 - **Ignore Behavioral Issues:** If your puppy shows signs of illness or behavioral issues (such as aggression or anxiety), consult with your vet or a professional trainer early on.
 - **Self-Medicating:** Never give your puppy human medications or treatments without consulting your vet. Certain substances can be toxic to dogs.
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Important Reminder for New Puppy Owners

- **Patience and Consistency Are Key:** Training and socialization take time. Be patient, consistent, and always reward good behavior.
 - **Early Intervention Is Crucial:** Address any health or behavioral concerns early with your vet or a trainer.
 - **Enjoy the Journey:** Raising a puppy is a rewarding experience. Focus on building a strong bond through care, training, and love.
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Contact Your Veterinarian Regularly: For personalized advice on care, vaccinations, and training, your veterinarian is your best resource.