



Obesity...Deadly but Preventable

Obesity is considered the most common nutritional disorder in dogs and cats. As with us humans, it is increasing as a health issue and is described as the deadliest of diseases and also the most preventable. That is especially unfortunate since in most cases, *we are responsible for our pet's weight*. In general, their weight is a factor of "too much food and too little exercise." Sound familiar?



"This is so depressing!!"

There are other factors however. One may be the quality and ingredients used in their food. Cheaper, dry foods with lower protein, higher grain content may actually encourage more eating to feel satisfied. The advent of high-carb, dry cat food is blamed for much of the epidemic of obesity in cats.

Cats should have more than 30% meat protein—not meat

by-products, corn or wheat—in their diet. A high-protein canned food may be a good solution.

Another factor in continued weight gain is that dog and cat fat cells produce hormones that decrease metabolism and decrease natural appetite suppression. Once fat, obese dogs and cats will burn fewer calories and want to eat more than lean animals.

Those are likely *causes*. What about *consequences* of obesity? The list includes heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, joint damage, arthritis, cancer, increased risk during surgery, lessened activity level and even heat intolerance. Clearly the cost in pain and suffering for your pet and vet bills and emotional pain for you are likely to be high.

How do I know if my pet is overweight? Can you feel your pet's ribs with your fingers? Ribs should *not be visible* but you should be able to feel them.

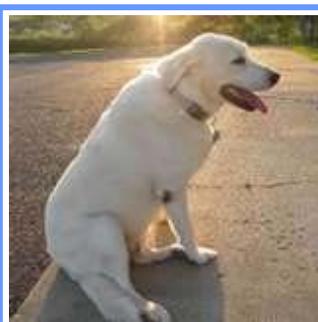
So what can we do? Prevention is preferable, of course. But if it's already too late for that, ideally start with a visit to your vet. Other serious health issues may be involved. Your vet can advise you about the best course of

action based on the severity of your pet's weight problem and any other relevant issues, including the type and level of exercise that would facilitate your challenge. Walks, interactive toys, a 4-legged playmate, etc. can all play a part.

In some cases a reduced-fat prescription diet may be called for and can be purchased from your vet. *These can produce almost "miraculous" results if YOU stick to it!* Many times a "lite" formula, high-quality pet food purchased from pet supply stores and more exercise is all that's needed. There are cautions, however.

When buying pet food, **the adage that "you get what you pay for" does generally apply.** This is no time to economize on your pet's health. **Also, read ingredient labels.** With cat food, a first ingredient of "meat by-products" followed by three grains won't provide enough protein for your carnivorous cat. Watch for nutritional deficiencies during a weight-loss campaign. One common symptom is flaky skin/coat. A vitamin/mineral supplement may be recommended, but a high-quality pet food is your best starting point!

Weight loss and diet can even be an important tool in treating or managing a variety of health issues. For example, a high-protein diet may be used to treat/manage diabetes in cats. A lower protein diet may be prescribed for kidney disease. Weight loss alone may produce improvement in joint pain and mobility issues. A high-quality diet, fed in the proper amount is a key to maintaining your pet's ideal body weight and condition of healthy skin and coat.



"Carrying around these extra pounds is exhausting!!"

These are things we all know but sometimes forget in our attempt to feel good when we give our pet a type or quantity of food that he/she just loves but isn't healthy. Begging and tail-wagging may work wonders on us but can do real harm to our unsuspecting, best buddies! And so, we are back where we started—responsible for our pet's weight.