

Get Healthy With Your Pet Lydia House Executive Director

“Ever wonder where you'd end up if you took your dog for a walk and never once pulled back on the leash?” ~*Robert Brault*

Having trouble finding motivation to exercise? There's a good chance your dog can give you the inspiration you need. Dogs need exercise just like people do, in fact they crave it. Regular exercise is necessary to keep your pet healthy both physically and mentally.

Proper exercise can prevent a major health problem seen in dogs- obesity. The Association for Pet Obesity Prevention performs an annual study; they found that an estimated 54% of dogs and cats in the United States are overweight or obese. Don't let your pet get so overweight they can't walk, start now. Pay attention to the amount of food your feeding your pet and make sure they're active. If your pet is already overweight please schedule a check-up with your veterinarian before introducing a rigorous exercise plan. A reference to view healthy dog weights is the Purina Body Condition Score. You can find it at: www.purinaveterinarydiets.com

Need another good reason to exercise your dog? A tired dog is a good dog. Exercise can prevent numerous behavior issues such as destructive chewing, excessive barking, digging, and hyperactivity. Dogs are inherently active; they are not built to be lazy. Some breeds were created for qualities like speed and endurance. Examples are hunting dogs like Retrievers and Pointers; and herding breeds like Australian Shepherds and Border Collies. All dogs, no matter the breed, benefit from a regular exercise routine.

Mix it up a little, taking your dog for daily walks is obviously an easy way to provide exercise, but there are many other opportunities for you and your dog to stay active. Swimming is a great option. If you have a water-loving dog then swimming is a perfect way to keep him/her fit. Some breeds like Labradors can easily spend hours in a pool, lake or river having fun. (Please never let your dog enter a fast moving or dangerous river.) Playing fetch is another option. Go out in the backyard with your dog and spend some time throwing a ball or Frisbee around, this is great quality time as well. If your backyard isn't big enough check out the dog parks in Visalia, they have plenty of room and can be a great way to socialize your pet at the same time. Please make sure your dog has had their complete set of vaccinations before you take your dog into a dog park or even for a walk around the neighborhood. This is especially vital for puppies that can easily pick up potentially fatal diseases like Parvo from parks and yards.

An important thing to remember while walking your dog is to pay attention to their paws. If your dog has not spent much time on concrete their paws may need some gentle breaking in before diving into long daily walks. Watch for cracking or sores on their pads. Also remember the concrete and asphalt can be extremely hot. Dogs have no protection from the heat and their pads can be burned.

If you are physically unable to walk, or you need an alternative to walking, think about a treadmill for your pet. This is a great way for them to get exercise in the safety of your own home.