

## • Joints, Muscles, and Heart

The veterinarian will check your pet's legs and feet, evaluate the condition of his joints and muscles, and use a stethoscope to listen to your pet's heart and lungs. The early signs of heart disease often are recognized during a routine health exam.

## • Abdomen and Reproductive System

Your veterinarian will feel the abdomen to detect irregularities such as enlarged organs, masses, or areas that are painful. Your pet's reproductive system will be examined for swellings, discharges, and breast lumps. If your pet has not been spayed or neutered, your veterinarian will explain that spaying or neutering provides many health benefits beyond birth control.

If the veterinarian finds any abnormalities during your pet's examination, he may recommend additional tests to diagnose or confirm a health problem.

## • How often should my pet be vaccinated?

How often your pet should be vaccinated depends on many factors, including breed, age, and lifestyle. Dogs should be vaccinated against distemper virus, parvovirus, adenovirus, and rabies virus. Cats should be immunized against feline panleukopenia (distemper) virus, herpesvirus, feline calicivirus, and rabies virus. Other vaccines may be appropriate based on where you live and other factors.

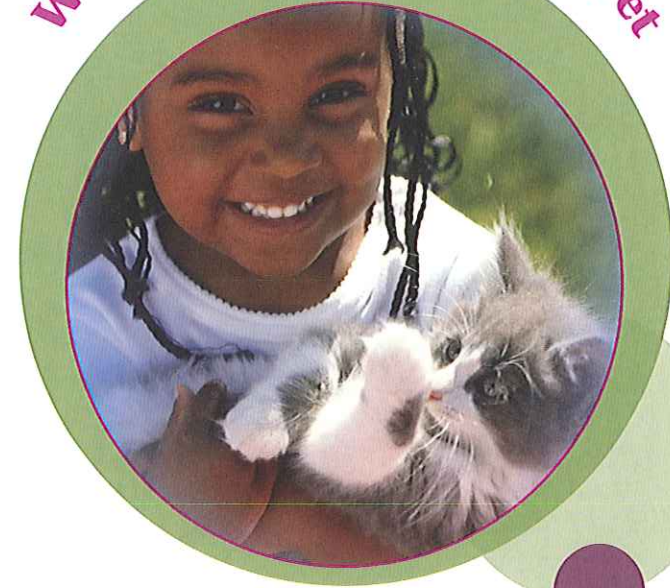
Immunizing your pet against disease is one of the best tools of preventive medicine. Your veterinarian will help you understand the recommended vaccination protocol for your pet's unique situation.

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Do not underestimate the importance of your pet's wellness examination. Taking your pet to the veterinarian once a year or more frequently means you are helping your pet live a longer and healthier life. Do your part to take care of your friend and companion!



## Wellness Exams for Your Pet



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## Why does my pet need a “wellness examination”?

A wellness examination gives your veterinarian the chance to evaluate your pet's overall health and to detect a problem before it turns into a serious illness. Your pet can't tell you in words how he is feeling, so the veterinarian relies on a thorough physical examination to determine if your pet is truly healthy. Based on the results of the examination, your veterinarian may recommend further diagnostic tests such as radiographs (X-rays) and blood tests.

Your veterinarian will likely recommend routine blood testing, urinalysis, and other tests for your pet if he is in his senior years. Some veterinarians also recommend routine blood work and urinalysis before your pet reaches his senior years in order to obtain “baseline values,” which can be used for comparison later in your pet's life.

## How often should my pet be examined?

Your pet ages relatively more quickly than you do. A veterinarian should examine your dog or cat at least once a year, and then more frequently once he reaches his senior years. Taking your pet to the veterinarian once a year is the same as if you were to see a physician only once every six to eight years.

Pets need more frequent attention as they get older, just as people do, to prevent and treat illnesses associated with aging. So much can change with regard to your pet's physical health in such a short amount of time; you can't afford to have your pet miss even one exam. Your veterinarian will recommend an appropriate examination schedule for your pet.

## What will happen during my pet's wellness examination?

Your veterinarian will ask several questions about your pet's health history and will take notes regarding your pet's diet, how much water your pet consumes, and a variety of daily behavioral patterns. Be sure to mention any unusual behavior your pet has exhibited, including:

- Excessive urination
- Excessive drinking of water
- Excessive panting
- Eating much more than usual or eating less than usual
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Excessive scratching
- Coughing
- Weight gain
- Weight loss
- Difficulty walking or running
- Difficulty getting up in the morning

Your veterinarian will also discuss your pet's potential exposure to fleas, ticks, heartworms, and intestinal parasites. The protocol your veterinarian will recommend to protect your pet from these parasites depends on where you live, your pet's lifestyle and age, and many other factors.

### Weight

A veterinary health-care team member will note your pet's temperature, pulse, respiration rate, and body weight. Weight is an important consideration in the health of a pet; an extra two or three pounds can mean

the difference between your pet being fit and trim or obese. Talk to your veterinarian about appropriate diet and exercise for your pet.

### Ears

You'll probably be asked if your dog or cat has been shaking his head or scratching at his ears and if you have noticed any odor coming from the ears. Your pet's deep, curved ear canals provide protection for the inner ear, but these canals also are snug homes for parasites, bacteria, and foreign objects. Your veterinarian will take a close look.

### Eyes

Your veterinarian will examine your pet's eyes, which allows him to see evidence of ulcers or injury to the eye. In addition, there are many diseases that can be detected by examining the eyes, including anemia, infections, glaucoma, cataracts, high blood pressure, jaundice, and allergies.

### Mouth and Teeth

Your veterinarian will check your pet's mouth, gums, and teeth for tartar buildup, tooth abnormalities, fractures, loose teeth, tumors, infections, and other problems. A lack of red or pink color in the lining of the lips and gums could indicate anemia. The veterinarian will also check the tongue and palate. A member of the veterinary health-care team will show you how to care for your pet's teeth at home, which helps to prevent periodontal disease and the associated bad breath and tooth loss.

### Skin and Coat

The skin is the body's largest organ and a good indicator of your pet's health. Your veterinarian will examine the condition of the skin and hair as a means of detecting allergies, infections, and tumors. The veterinarian will also check for fleas, ticks, other external parasites, and wounds.