



CANINE LIFE STAGE: YOUNG ADULT

So, you just used the AAHA Canine Life Stage Calculator to determine that your dog is in the young adult stage of life. Congrats! Knowing your dog's life stage helps you provide a lifetime of optimal care for your pooch.

A dog's life can be divided into four stages: puppy, young adult, mature adult, and senior. The stages are based on a dog's maturation and aging process. Because dogs evolve as they mature, they require different approaches to healthcare as they progress from puppy to senior pet. In fact, there are at least 10 health-related factors based on age, size, lifestyle, health status, and breed that your veterinary team regularly assesses to keep your dog healthy, happy, and safe.

When you understand your dog's life stage, you and your veterinary team become partners in providing your dog with an individualized healthcare approach to every veterinary visit. The end result: a lifetime of optimal care your dog needs and deserves!

YOUNG ADULT DOG CARE 101

Your puppy has become an adult, so let's start adulting! A young adult dog has different dietary, vaccination, behavioral, and dental care needs than a puppy or senior dog. Good preventive healthcare and at least semi-annual to annual physical exams will put your dog on track to a long and healthy life.

Working and service dogs may require more frequent visits as a result of their job and genetics. Together, you and the veterinary team can develop a plan to maintain your dog's optimum health and specific physical abilities so they can perform their special roles.

Your dog will continue to get a thorough physical exam during their veterinary visits. Your veterinarian will take your dog's temperature and check their body and muscle condition, skin, eyes, ears, nose,



mouth, heart, lungs, gastrointestinal system, urinary system, brain, nerves, bones, joints, and lymph nodes. Tell your veterinarian about your dog's mobility and activity at home to help detect early signs of orthopedic disease and arthritis.

Below are some topics specific to your young adult dog's life stage that you'll want to discuss with the veterinary team at your visit.

YOUR YOUNG ADULT DOG'S LIFESTYLE AND SAFETY

Your dog wants to run, play, and explore! Talk to your veterinarian about how much exercise your young adult dog needs and ways to keep them safely occupied. A dog with nothing to do can often get into trouble! Discuss how to keep your dog protected by identifying potential hazards inside, outside, and when traveling. Ask your veterinary team about the best ways to confine your dog in your home, car, on a walk, or in the yard.

All dogs, regardless of their life stage, have to travel safely and with minimal stress. Call your veterinarian prior to your dog's visit to learn how to acclimate your dog to travel and determine the most effective way to transport them for their visit.

INFECTIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS

Infections transmitted between humans and animals are called zoonoses. They are transmitted in different ways, such as bites, raw food, and feces. Prevent disease and keep everyone healthy by letting the veterinary team know if there are children, elderly, or immune-compromised family members who may be exposed to your dog.

YOUNG ADULT DOG BEHAVIOR

Puppies don't outgrow unruly behavior. The young adult life stage can be the most challenging as your dog matures socially and behaviorally. Talk to your veterinarian about any issues with jumping, barking, or mouthing. There may be breed-specific behaviors (e.g., digging or herding), individual exercise needs, and appropriate mental engagement you would like to talk about, too.



Ask questions and share your concerns, because what you do now will have a lasting effect on your dog's relationship with you, other people, and other animals.

- How does your dog act and play?
- How is house training going?
- Has your dog developed any fears?
- Has your dog shown aggressive or unruly behavior?

Many issues can be addressed and corrected with expert advice from your veterinarian, and the veterinary team can help you select appropriate trainers. Training classes improve socialization and wellbeing and strengthen the bond between you and your dog.

YOUR YOUNG ADULT DOG'S NUTRITION

The food you feed your dog is important for many reasons. With more than 50% of dogs suffering from obesity and obesity-related illnesses, ensure your dog doesn't follow the crowd. Your veterinarian will establish a target weight range based on your dog's current weight and muscle condition. Weight control and good health go hand in hand!

Also, your dog may develop a medical condition that is effectively managed by food with specific nutrient levels. You will find everyone—from pet store employees to internet bloggers to breeders—has an opinion about the best food to feed your dog. Veterinarians have the most medical training when it comes to your dog's nutrition, so let them help you! Together, you can choose a quality food with targeted nutrition based on your dog's breed, size, and needs.

Thinking of or already using supplements, like CBD? Talk to the veterinary team so they can help you make the safest choices for your pet.



PARASITES AND YOUNG ADULT DOGS

Parasites don't only affect puppies—young adult dogs still need to be protected. A year-round medicine to prevent intestinal parasites should be continued as part of your dog's healthcare plan. Remember, parasites are found in your dog's feces and can be transmitted to humans, so talk to your veterinarian about how to keep everyone in your home safe. Heartworm disease, fleas, and ticks don't discriminate by age, either. Keep heartworm preventive and flea and tick control up-to-date. Expect annual testing for tick-borne infection, heartworm disease, and intestinal parasites at your visit.

VACCINATIONS FOR YOUNG ADULT DOGS

Vaccination is a crucial component to preventive medicine in dogs. Vaccinations keep your dog's immune system strong to fight against infection. Several vaccines were likely administered when your dog was a puppy. Depending on your dog's vaccine history, lifestyle, and risk of exposure to disease, your veterinarian may adjust your dog's vaccine schedule. Antibody titer testing to determine protection from a few specific viral infections may be suggested as well. Your veterinarian will advise which vaccines are necessary to keep your dog healthy.

YOUR YOUNG ADULT DOG'S TEETH

A young adult dog's deciduous teeth ("baby teeth") may still fall out, and permanent teeth have grown in or are on the way. During all this action, your dog may also want to chew on everything! Talk with the veterinary team about acceptable and safe chew toys.

With good dental care throughout a dog's life, dental disease can be prevented or minimized. If left untreated, periodontal disease can lead to chronic pain, infection, and poor quality of life for your dog. Because so many dogs are affected by dental disease, your dog's teeth and mouth will be examined by your veterinarian. This allows a preliminary dental plan to be designed and discussed. The plan may require anesthesia to obtain X-rays to further examine teeth positioning and evaluate and treat periodontal disease. If you have concerns about anesthesia, tell your veterinary team. They are happy to answer any questions and explain the risks associated with nonanesthetic dentistry.

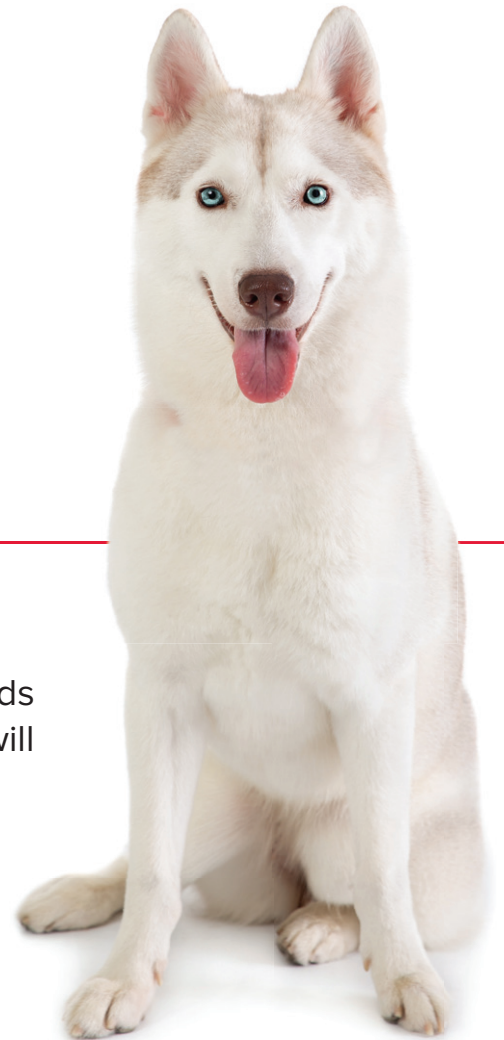
Talk to your veterinarian about home oral hygiene. Find out about dental products approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (vohc.org) that can help maximize your dog's lifelong health.

YOUR YOUNG ADULT DOG'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

All dogs not intended for breeding should be spayed or neutered. There are many benefits to spaying or neutering your dog. Sterilized dogs live longer than those that are not. The timing of when to spay or neuter your dog is based on factors such as sex and how much your dog is expected to weigh as an adult. Talk to your veterinarian to determine the appropriate timeframe to sterilize your dog. For those owners who choose to breed, responsible breeding practices should be reviewed.

BREED-SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR YOUR YOUNG ADULT DOG

Your dog's breed may put them at higher risk for developing certain diseases. If your dog is a mixed-breed, consider DNA testing for breed identification to determine risk factors for breed-specific conditions. At your visit, your veterinarian will want to screen your dog for orthopedic, kidney, liver, and eye abnormalities that may be breed-related. Early detection is one of the most effective ways to keep your dog healthy and happy.



Understanding your young adult dog's unique needs is the first step to providing a lifetime of care that will lead to a happy and healthy canine companion.

Looking for a veterinarian for your dog?

Find an AAHA-accredited veterinary practice by using the Hospital Locator at aaha.org/locate.