



*We understand how significant your pet is to your life.*

## **THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF PUPPY OWNERSHIP!**

As a puppy owner, you should be aware of some very important things so that your new puppy will get a good start toward a healthy life.

First, puppies should receive a complete physical exam to rule out congenital problems such as hernias, heart murmurs, and retained testicles. Other less apparent problems may not reveal themselves until after your puppy has had a chance to grow, therefore we recommend a complete physical when you first purchase or adopt your puppy, then every three to four weeks when each booster vaccination is given.

Until the age of four to five months, a puppy's immune system is very underdeveloped. This is the reason that viruses are extremely common in young puppies. Some viruses may incubate for as long as three to four weeks before noticeable clinical problems occur. Therefore, we recommend minimal exposure to other dogs and puppies and to avoid parks, pet supply stores, and daycare facilities until one week after your puppy's final booster vaccination. Nevertheless, 9-16 weeks of age is also an important socialization period, so it's acceptable for your puppy to play with other dogs that you know are healthy, and to attend puppy classes after the first vaccinations are given (at approximately 9 weeks of age.) Because disease can still be transmitted, always watch your puppy closely for symptoms such as coughing, sneezing, listlessness, or vomiting and diarrhea. Please call us immediately if these signs develop.

When a puppy consumes its mother's first milk, it receives immunity to some of the common diseases we're concerned about. This immunity is temporary and slowly fades away over the first four to five months of life. As we vaccinate the puppy, we slowly help it build its own immunity. Our goal is to give a vaccination every three to four weeks until the maternal protection is completely gone, so we give the puppy its final booster when it can make its own strong immune response.

Depending on the age of the puppy when you first bring it in and what vaccinations it has received previously, we will help design the perfect vaccination program for your puppy. The last vaccine is generally given at or after 16 weeks of age.

Your puppy may have already been "dewormed"; however, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Association of Parasitologists recommend a practice called "strategic deworming". This entails deworming a puppy every two weeks until the puppy is three

months of age, then monthly until the puppy is six months of age. Since no one medication will be effective against all the different intestinal parasites (i.e. roundworms, tapeworms, hookworms, whipworms, coccidia, and Giardia), it is still important to check fecal samples. Intestinal parasites lay eggs which pass into the feces and these eggs are shed at variable times. Therefore, we recommend at least two clean (no parasites seen) samples to establish that there are no parasites inhabiting the intestines.

We check your puppy each time we do a physical exam for ear mites, fleas, and other external parasites if indicated. This is necessary because occasionally the infestation is so minimal at the time of the initial exam that these parasites may not reveal themselves in the typical manner. We recommend you watch your puppy closely for excessive scratching and call us if you notice any areas of hair loss.

Finally, there are many excellent training programs available in the Chicago area. Please use the enclosed handout of recommended trainers to find the trainer with the same teaching philosophy as yours. We are anxious to hear your thoughts and can point you in the direction of the appropriate trainer.

We welcome you to our practice and want to take this opportunity to ensure you that nothing is more important to us than the health and quality of life of your new puppy.

Do you have questions about...

- Microchips, tattoos, or tags
- Optional vaccines (Bordetella, Corona, Lyme Disease)
- Heartworm disease (handout enclosed)
- Flea control (handout enclosed)
- Dental care (brushing, t/d food, CET chews)
- Feeding amounts (handout on ideal body weight enclosed)
- Housebreaking / crate training
- Biting/chewing problems
- Exercise, leash walking
- Positive reinforcement trainers (listed on service handout)
- Introduction of a new baby or pet into the home
- Nail trimming / grooming
- Zoonosis (disease or parasites spread from animals to humans)

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