

# The New Puppy Checklist

## *You have a new furry family member. Now what?*

If you're reading this, then you probably just brought a new puppy home, or you're planning on bringing a new puppy home soon. Either way, congratulations! There's nothing like a cute, fuzzy new addition to the family.

While it's important to start right in on the cuddling and training needed by a new puppy, it's also crucial to get a head start on your puppy's health. You want to make sure your new friend gets off on the right foot, and this means scheduling your puppy's first veterinary visit. Depending on your new puppy's age and expected lifestyle, there are a lot of different things you can expect from your veterinarian. Read on to learn more.

### **Puppy's First Visit to the Vet**

When you take your puppy to the veterinarian for the first time, your good doctor will probably want to give him or her a [physical exam](#) before anything else. This is really important – your veterinarian can find physical problems with your pooch, such as poor gait, heart murmur or skin infections, just by looking him or her over and get your puppy on a treatment plan right away.

In addition, your veterinarian will want to make sure your puppy is free of a variety of illnesses and conditions, and to do so he or she will perform a variety of tests, including:

- Fecal exam to check for intestinal parasites
- Chemistry and electrolyte tests to help evaluate internal organ status
- A complete blood count (CBC) to screen your pet for infection, inflammation, or anemia and other blood-related conditions
- Start parasite control (through the use of prescription medication) to treat intestinal parasites and prevent [heartworm](#)
- Begin [protecting your puppy from flea- and tick-borne diseases](#)

If your puppy is older than six months old during this initial visit, he or she will also need to undergo a heartworm test. Because it usually takes 6-7 months for an infected dog to test positive, heartworm wouldn't show up in tests on puppies younger than six months of age.

### **Vaccines**

Vaccinations often depend on a variety of factors, including your dog's age and your geographic location. In general, however, all puppies and dogs should have the following vaccines:

- [Distemper](#), [Parvovirus](#), Coronavirus, Hepatitis, and Parainfluenza – these are often combined into a single vaccine.
- Rabies, a shot which initially requires boosters at intervals determined by state regulations

When it comes to other vaccines, it really depends on the puppy – his or her lifestyle, your lifestyle, your geographic location, and your puppy's age all factor in to vaccination. For instance, the [Bordetella \(Kennel Cough\)](#) vaccine is highly recommended for all dogs; this is especially true if there's a possibility that your puppy will be boarded at doggie daycare or have exposure to other dogs regularly. However, if your dog isn't likely to leave home or interact with other dogs much, it might not be as important. Another recommended vaccine is that for [leptospirosis](#), which is especially important for dogs located in areas with lots of wildlife, rodents and/or farm animals. If your puppy has access to the woods or a large amount of land to roam – hunting dogs fit into this category especially – then it might be a good idea to talk to your veterinarian about the Leptospirosis vaccine. However, even dogs that live in suburban or urban areas can get leptospirosis.

There are a number of other vaccines that could be recommended by your veterinarian. In addition, most vaccinations require boosters, from once every few weeks (for puppies) to once annually or every few years. We understand that this might seem confusing, but it's really important! The best thing to do is talk with your veterinarian, who will set up a vaccination schedule appropriate for your dog.

### **Any Questions?**

Your puppy's first veterinary visit is also a great time to discuss other topics with your veterinarian, such as the health benefits of [spaying and neutering](#), diet, dental health, [house training](#), [socializing](#), regularly scheduled veterinary visits and wellness bloodwork and other ways to keep your puppy a [well-behaved and well-](#)

## The New Puppy Checklist

[adjusted member of your family](#). Remember this rule of thumb – don't be afraid to arrive at your veterinarian's office with a list of all the questions you might have about your new pooch! There are no dumb questions when it comes to keeping your pet healthy and happy.

*If you have any questions or concerns, you should always visit or call your veterinarian – they are your best resource to ensure the health and well-being of your pets.*

*The opinions and views expressed in this post are those of the author's and do not necessarily represent the beliefs, policies or positions of PetHealthNetwork.com, IDEXX Laboratories, Inc. or its affiliates and partner companies.*