

Nutrition and Feeding

In addition to milk from the bitch, your puppy has been fed IAMS Large Breed Smart Puppy kibble since three weeks of age. Initially, the kibble was softened with Esbilac formula, switching to water at 5 weeks. Currently, the puppy is eating 3 meals a day, about 1/2 cup at each feeding, dry.

Increase this amount as your puppy grows. Use the amount of food suggested on the dog food bag as a guide. When he loses interest in his third meal, delete it and only feed twice a day until he is 8 months to a year old. Remove uneaten food after 15 minutes. If your puppy has excessively soft stools, try backing off on the amount slightly for a day or two. If the soft stool persists over several months, you may need to switch to an adult food earlier than otherwise recommended.

Do pay careful attention to the weight of your puppy/adult dog. Weight gain in the puppy should be carefully controlled and monitored and should not exceed one to two pounds per week between weeks 7-12 and 2 to 3 pounds for the rest of his growth. A fat dog is not a healthy dog. Excess weight can break down muscle tissue in a puppy and put more pressure on the hip sockets. Rapid growth rate is a factor in developing hip dysplasia. You should always be able to feel the ribs through a thin layer of fat/skin. For the same reason, we do not recommend feeding a puppy chow longer than 6 months. Make the transition to a premium adult large breed formula at that time to lessen the possibility of joint problems later in life.

If you switch to another brand of dog food, we recommend making the transition over a several day period to avoid digestive upset. If you don't have easy access to IAMS feeds, we will be happy to provide you with enough to make the transition.

Always have fresh cool water available. Changes in water can lead to loose stools, so do not be surprised if your puppy has loose stools for a few days after you take him home. Also, the nervousness of the trip, new surroundings, and the loss of Mother and littermates can lead to loose stools.

The AKC has the following words of advice on feeding your dog:

A good diet will keep your dog looking and feeling his best. It provides your dog with the right amounts of essential nutrients: proteins, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins, minerals, and water. Your dog must have all these in correct proportions to stay healthy. Dog food companies make a variety of foods for all life stages, from puppyhood to senior citizenship.

With so many dog foods on the market, it's tough to know what's right for your dog. You can ask a breeder or veterinarian for advice, but it's up to you to see how the food affects your dog. If your dog's energy level is right for his breed and age, if his skin and coat are healthy, if his stools are firm and brown, and if he seems to be in overall good health, then the food is doing its job.

Many owners prefer to feed kibble (dry), rather than soft dog food for several reasons. Crunching the hard kibbles keeps your dog's teeth clean and exercises his jaw muscles. It also keeps the dog's stools compact and firm, resulting in easier cleanup. If your dog prefers soft food, you can mix some in with the kibble (try three-quarters dry with one-quarter canned). Semi-moist foods, while convenient, don't offer the nutritional benefits of premium kibble or canned foods.

Puppies need more calories and essential nutrients than do adult dogs. Choose a food specially formulated for puppies. Puppies under six months should get three or four meals a day. They are growing rapidly, but their stomachs have limited capacity. After six months they can handle two to three meals a day.

Adult dogs should be fed according to their size and energy needs. Most adults should get two meals a day.

All dogs need separate food and water dishes. The bowls should be cleaned daily, and cool, fresh water should be available at all times.

Dogs can be great beggars, but don't let yours charm you into the habit of sharing your food. Dogs' nutritional needs are different from humans', and you're doing your dog a disservice by giving him a diet meant for you. There are plenty of nutritious dog treats on the market, which you can feed as a part of a dog's overall food intake. Dogs also love vegetables such as broccoli, carrots, zucchini, cauliflower, peas, and beans, and fruits such as bananas, apples, and melon. These make great low-calorie treats.

What Not To Feed

Never give your dog chocolate. It contains theobromine, a chemical that is toxic to dogs. Also, don't feed your dogs bones that can splinter or that have sharp edges. Large, hard bones such as knuckle and marrow bones are fine, but parboil them to destroy harmful parasites, and take them away from your dog if he starts to actually eat the bone rather than just chew on it.