

# Getting the Overweight Dog in Shape

An important aspect of being a [responsible dog owner](#) is being sure your dog is in shape. You may think your fat dog is adorable just the way he is, but the truth is he could already be at risk for health problems. Certain breeds will be affected more than others by even the slightest weight gain, so it's important to maintain your dog's fitness [throughout his entire life](#). Also, you want to make sure your dog does not have any underlying health or metabolic conditions such as hypothyroidism, which might be making him or her overweight.

## Proper Diet

Dogs gain weight the same way humans do: by eating too much and [exercising too little](#). Dogs that eat excessive amounts of treats, table scraps, and food at mealtimes will gain weight quickly, especially if they are not very active. Before starting any new diet or exercise plan for your dog, have it approved by your veterinarian.

One simple [solution](#) to jump-start your dog's weight loss is to feed your dog his normal food in the morning but replacing his second meal with mostly green beans (low sodium), a bit of kibble, and a doggie multi-vitamin in the evening.

Switching your dog's treats to healthier options will help him lose weight, too. Cut back on calories by greatly [reducing the number of treats given](#) at a time. Also, try replacing biscuits, cheese, and other high-fat treats with fresh chopped carrots, apples, or green beans that are free of added flavoring. Your dog will most likely still enjoy this new, crunchy treat!

If you are training your dog and give treats as a reward, remember to subtract those calories from your dog's food allotment.

Lastly, don't make the common error of associating food with love. Plying your dog with food to the point of obesity will only likely shorten the amount of time you will have him in your life. And don't put too much stock in your dog's opinion, either: Many dogs will act ravenous even after they have met their caloric requirements for the day.

## Exercise

Of course, additional exercise will help your dog [lose weight](#). Most dogs love to go for a walk, run, swim, or hike, so be sure to get outside and enjoy some outdoor activities with him! For an obese dog, it's best to start out slow and increase exercise over time once he starts losing weight. However, be sure you aren't overexerting him, especially if he has a medical condition, and watch for signs of [heatstroke](#).

## Making Exercise Fun

Canine sports are a great way to exercise your dog while building the bond between the two of you. [Agility](#), which is basically a timed obstacle course, requires you to be able to communicate with your dog via hand signals and body language, and all that zooming through tunnels and over jumps burns plenty of calories. If you're a newbie, find a training class so you can introduce your dog – and yourself – to the obstacles you'll encounter on the course. You can learn more about many of these activities through the [AKC website](#).

Constantly be aware of how your dog looks and acts. Slow down or stop if he is panting excessively, and find a cool or shaded spot for some relief. Dogs of all breeds can overheat. Brachycephalic, or short-nosed breeds, can overheat very easily, so on hot days opt for a game of indoor fetch in the air conditioning or short walks in the early morning or late at night.

And no matter what kind of dog you have, remember that asphalt can be sizzling on hot summer days – keep those unprotected paw pads in mind! All dogs will need to get acclimated to running for extended periods on hard surfaces.

## Health Problems Caused by Obesity in Dogs

Dachshunds, Basset Hounds, and other long and low-bodied breeds that become overweight add strain to their backs and joints, making it painful or difficult for them to walk or sit. Brachycephalic breeds (meaning they have short noses and flat faces) such as Pugs, Boxers, and Bulldogs have an increased risk of breathing and respiratory problems from being overweight. In addition to shortened life expectancy, overweight and obese dogs are at higher risk for diseases such as diabetes, arthritis, high blood pressure, breathing problems, and cancer. Have your veterinarian monitor your dog's health and weight frequently to be sure he is losing weight and improving his overall health. Even the slightest difference will improve his overall quality of life.

### Dachshund Weight Chart

Dachshund Breed Council

www.dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk

Dachshund Body Condition Score

TOO THIN

**1** Ribs, spine and hip bones are visible from a distance. No discernible body fat and an obvious loss of muscle mass.

**2** Ribs, spine and hip bones are easily visible. No palpable body fat and minimal loss of muscle mass.

**3** Ribs can be easily felt and may be visible with no palpable fat. Top of the spine is visible and hip bones may also be prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.

IDEAL

**4** Ribs can be easily felt with minimal fat covering. Waist is easily noted when viewed from above. An "abdominal tuck" is also present, meaning that the abdomen appears tucked up behind the rib cage when viewed from the side.

**5** Well-proportioned. Ribs can be easily felt without excess fat covering. Waist can be observed behind the ribs when viewed from above. Abdominal tuck is present.

TOO HEAVY

**6** Ribs can be felt through a slight excess fat covering. Waist is visible from above, but not prominent. Abdominal tuck is present.

**7** Ribs are difficult to feel under a heavy fat covering. Noticeable fat deposits over the lower back and base of the tail. Waistline is absent or barely visible and abdomen may appear obviously rounded or saggy.

**8** Ribs can only be felt with heavy pressure. Significant fat deposits over the lower back and base of the tail. Waist and abdominal tuck are both absent. Obvious abdominal distention may also be present.

**9** Ribs cannot be felt under a very heavy fat covering. Large fat deposits are seen over the neck, chest, spine and base of the tail. Waist and abdominal tuck are both absent. Obvious abdominal distention.

1

3

5

7

9

For more information and tips on caring for your Dachshund, visit:

[www.dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk](http://www.dachshundbreedcouncil.org.uk) and [www.dachshundhealth.org.uk](http://www.dachshundhealth.org.uk)

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Body condition images by Hannah James.

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