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10 tips to help him live a longer life

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You want your furry friend to be with you as long as possible. Incorporate these suggestions into his care to help ensure his health and longevity.

You want to improve your dog or cat's health, but it can be hard to know where to begin. There are so many factors to be considered to help your companion live a longer life. Taking a holistic approach by looking at all aspects of his care and lifestyle is a good starting point. This checklist of ten tips will help enhance his health and lengthen his life (and maybe yours too)!



1. NURTURE WITH NUTRITION

As conscientious consumers, we review ingredient lists on our own food.

We need to do the same for our animals. Look for labels that state whole meat ingredients like chicken, beef or lamb – not poultry by-products, etc. Choose superior brands of pet food that promise healthier ingredients. When you're in the mood, you can do some good ol' home cookin' for your best friend. It's easy and fun to make delicious treats at home.

2. SECURITY WITH SUPPLEMENTS

I like to think of vitamins and minerals as a form of supplemental health insurance for animals, providing the nutrients needed to maintain health. A quality daily supplement is the most valuable contribution you can make to your dog or cat's longevity.

To be truly effective, vitamins and minerals need to be balanced, complete and able to be absorbed by the body. Read and compare labels carefully. Choose vitamins that state the milligrams or International Units on the label, and that contain high quality ingredients.

3. VACCINATE CAREFULLY FOR A LONGER LIFE

A new puppy or kitten may be stressed – particularly if he just came from a shelter or rescue. Take him for vaccinations when his systems are strong and balanced. Never vaccinate an animal compromised by an

infection or illness. Previously vaccinated dogs and cats can get blood tests that register titers or immune memory in lieu of certain vaccines. Research has shown that after their one-year boosters, many dogs and cats are protected for five to seven years or longer, depending on the vaccine.

4. HEAL HOLISTICALLY

Holistic treatments and therapies are powerful tools that complement and enhance the body's innate ability to rebalance and restore itself, thus helping your animal overcome illness and disease.

Holistic medicine provides gentle but effective guidance that can remedy many diseases and health problems without the side effects so often associated with more conventional forms of medicine.

Many holistic modalities and techniques are available. It helps to know which treatment is best for your companion's specific problem. Chinese herbs work wonderfully with diabetes. Acupuncture and spinal manipulation effectively treat back problems. Allergy elimination techniques like NAET work well for both dogs and cats, while homeopathic remedies treat a wide spectrum of medical problems.

5. CONSIDER THE CELLS

Thinking small has a big effect on longer life. Your animal's body has trillions of cells organized into specialized tissues and organs. Every cell is in the business of living, and if they all succeed, your dog and cat will live a longer and healthier life.

We typically evaluate food in terms of proteins, fats and carbohydrates. But the real value is in the vitamins, minerals and phytochemicals that food contains; these are the tools that cells need to maintain and prolong life. We couldn't maintain our homes without mops, hammers and nails. Just so, our cells can't clean out wastes like carcinogens and toxins without the vitamins and minerals that cells need to do their important jobs.

6. SECRETS OF SUPERFOODS

Italian researchers have found that eating as little as one cup of raw vegetables daily can add two years to your life. Today, scientific research is proving what Hippocrates said hundreds of years ago: "Let food be thy medicine."

Phytochemicals, contained in what are now aptly dubbed superfoods, have well-documented health benefits. The beautiful colors of many fruits and vegetables are doing a lot more than just looking pretty. Dark vibrant green kale leaves are rich in compounds with long names like glucosinolates and sulforaphanes. These help cells "clean up after the party" and clear carcinogenic substances more quickly.

7. GO GREEN

Adding a bit of green to your companion's diet can do as much good for the planet as it can for him. Eating more fresh fruits and vegetables has many health benefits, including reducing the risk of cancer. Cats often like cooked asparagus and cantaloupe, while our easier-to-please canine friends love everything from a piece of apple to a broccoli stem.

Create a dog and cat-friendly outdoor environment by using natural fertilizers and pest control. In 2004, the Purdue University School of Veterinary Medicine linked bladder cancer in Scottish terriers to exposure to lawn chemicals. Rain creates a mist of these chemicals that lingers at the body height of dogs and cats – and many of these animals enjoy chewing occasional blades of grass.

“Green” toys accomplish the same goals as more traditional toys, but impact the environment less. Non-organic cotton uses more insecticides than any other major crop. Many companies now offer toys, collars and leashes made from organic cotton, hemp or recycled materials.

Believe it or not, eight billion pounds of cat litter wind up in landfills each year! Consider litters made from recycled materials such as wood, pine, bark or natural flushable litters from corn and wheat. Your cats don’t need to ingest chemical-laden scented litter particles as they clean their furry feet.

8. EXTRA EXERCISE

Regular exercise is part of a healthy lifestyle for all of us – humans, dogs and cats. If it’s not safe for your cat to go outside, make sure he has a scratching post and a selection of toys. Setting aside some time to play with her every day is a great way to give her the exercise she needs, and will improve your own quality of life.

All dogs need exercise, even notorious couch-potato breeds. Taking your dog for a long brisk walk is the perfect excuse for you to get some exercise too!

9. ROUTINE MEDICAL EXAMINATIONS

A yearly health check helps detect problems before they become serious. Older animals should get yearly blood panels to monitor their health. Those that live in tick-infested regions of the country need yearly blood tests so any tick-borne diseases can be treated promptly, avoiding long term complications.

10. QUALITY TIME

Dogs and cats are social animals. Social animals don’t want to be alone – they want company and interesting interactions.

Relationships are an important part of health. Strong bonds with others means protection from loneliness and depression. It works both ways. Healthier animals are happier and happier animals are healthier. Just as important is that both humans and animals benefit from quality time spent together.

We enjoy walks more if we can take a dog along and watch him sniff and explore. Our hearts sing in a special way as we stroke a cat and listen to her purr. Animals and people create a special winning combination.

If our animals could tell us one thing, it might be, “Take time to stop and smell the roses, and enjoy life with me.”

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