

The Skinny on Exercising with your Dog

Exercising with your dog is truly the best of both worlds. It helps you stay fit and active – and also yields a multitude of health benefits for your pup too! Exercising with your dog helps them maintain a healthy weight, keeps their joints and muscles strong and improves their cardio-vascular system. Not to mention, exercise also works wonders on your dog's overall mental health – because what dog doesn't love outdoor play time?!

Like humans, every dog's physical abilities and limitations are different. Thus, tailoring your workout to your dog's needs is crucial. For example, a dog with arthritis or hip dysplasia may experience discomfort during a long run. So before you begin an exercise routine with your dog, check with your veterinarian first.

Once you know which exercise is safest for you and your pup, here are a few safety tips to keep in mind:

- 1) When running, walking or hiking with your dog, always keep them on a leash. Even the most well-mannered dogs can sometimes get sidetracked by exciting or potentially dangerous distractions.
- 2) Always provide plenty of fresh water for your dog. This is especially important for hot days. If your dog is fair-skinned you may want to consider protecting them with a doggie sunscreen.
- 3) If your dog is new to exercise, start slowly. Allow for warm-up and cool-down times.
- 4) If you're going on a long run or walk with your dog, try to keep your dog on dirt or grass the majority of the time so they won't burn or excessively wear down the pads of their feet.
- 5) Know your dog's limits (and yours!) and try not to overextend yourselves.
- 6) After exercising outdoors, examine your dog's coat and pads for foxtails, burs, sores, or anything else unusual.

A good rule of thumb for beginning an exercise program with your dog is: 30 minutes of physical activity, three times a week. Dogs love routine, so establishing a set time and place will help your dog look forward to their exercise time!

