

What to do

- Medical. First, have your veterinarian check for possible medical conditions.
- Feeding. Feed less. If feeding manufactured dog food substance (kibble), select a premium *quality* product* (usually NOT one heavily advertised or sold by veterinarians) and feed to *gradually* reduce weight. 3-5% per week; then 1% per week as dog nears ideal weight. If feeding real food (BARF), simply *gradually* reduce amount fed.
- Exercise. 150 minutes minimum of exercise a week (20-25 min/day) for healthy adult dogs. Adjust for individual dogs.
- Snacks & treats. Stop! Don't do it! Ignore the 'begging'. Train your dog not to beg by training yourself not to feed. Feeding a begging overweight dog is animal abuse! Nothing less!

* See our brochures:

- *Kibble: Making Wise Choices*
- *Real Dog, Real Body, Real Food*

Golden Girls Canine Health was begun in honor and memory of Jennifer, my canine companion for 11 wonderful years. If I knew then what I know now, she probably would have lived a longer healthier life.

Your Dog's Look & Feel

Thin



Ribs, tops of vertebrae, pelvic bones visible or easily felt (including space between ribs). Obvious waist and abdomen tuck. Can't feel fat at ribs.



Ideal



Ribs felt with very little fat covering. From above: waist visible behind ribs. From side: abdomen tucked.



Overweight



Ribs felt with heavy fat cover. From above: waist barely visible. From side: slight abdominal tuck.



Obese



Unable to feel ribs under heavy fat cover. From above: no waist, possible bulge. From side: no abdominal tuck; possible distension. Fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail.



Art by Purina®

Bottom Line...

Overfeeding your dog is abuse, not love.

Golden Girls Canine Health

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Your Dog: Fit or Fat?



Provided by
**Golden Girls
Canine Health**
as a Public Service

OUR MISSION

Improve canine companion animal nutrition, environment, genetics, and health care.

General

- Overweight is today's #1 canine health danger¹.
- Overweight is the most common canine nutritional disorder.

Wisdom

- Overfeeding your dog is animal abuse.
- Each dog has an ideal *weight range* that typically changes with season and age. My senior Golden Retriever's weight increases about 2-3 pounds during winter because she exercises less. I decrease her food to manage her weight.

Causes

- The #1 cause of fat dogs is – Humans!
- Why? Dogs no longer must find their own food. They merely find their food bowl. And the food bowl is filled with processed carbohydrates (manufactured food-like substances) rather than real meat and bones a dog's body is intended to thrive on. If this causes you to reflect and compare to your own food choices—you're getting it!

Results of Overweight

- Increased disease risk to immune, cardiovascular, respiratory, skeletal, etc., systems.

Statistics & Data

- 83% of USA dogs are overweight² – exceeding weight appropriate for their body structure.
- Overweight = 10-15% above ideal weight.
- Obese = 15-25% above ideal weight³. Body weight beyond skeletal and physical limits caused by excess body fat.
- Thin dogs live longer healthier lives than their overweight littermates.

Dogs prone to overweight

- Labrador and Golden Retrievers, Cavalier King Charles Spaniels, Cairn Terriers, Bassett Hounds, Shetland Sheepdogs, Dachshunds, and Beagles.

How overweight happens

- *Wrong food.* Feeding poor quality kibble, high in processed carbohydrates, rather than real meat protein. Feeding unhealthy treats.
- *Too much food.* Feeding to present weight rather than optimum weight⁴. Leaving food out more than 15-20 minutes. Feeding treats, table scraps, etc., *in addition to* regular meal.
- *Not enough exercise.* Dogs need enough exercise to burn up the food calories they consume or they get fat (like us).

Overweight Contributors

- *Disease.* A very small percent of overweight dogs are disease-caused. However, the first step in reducing your dog's weight is a visit to your vet to rule out disease.
- *Age.* As they age, dogs play less and therefore burn fewer calories. Unless food is reduced, older dogs get fat. Feed less and encourage gentle exercise for older dogs. NOTE: Older dogs need as much, if not more, *high quality* protein in their diet than they did as adult dogs.
- *Stress.* Stress causes bodily systems to behave abnormally and frequently leads to fat accumulation.

¹ Kidd, Randy, DVM, PHD. Too Much Love, *The Whole Dog Journal*, Vol. 9, No.8

² Banfield, The Pet Hospital. Data of 3.5 million animals seen annually.

³ My 55 pound Golden Retriever would be overweight at 60 pounds and obese at 63 pounds.

⁴ If my dog weighed 70 pounds and should weigh 60, I should *gradually* decrease food quantity until she was eating to her 60 pound ideal weight. This will take many months to achieve.