

## Dog Channel - Fluffing up a Bichon Frise

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Fluffing up a Bichon Frise

By Kathy Salzberg, NCMG

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Kathy Salzberg shares great grooming tips for the Bichon Frise to look the very best.

Q. When my elderly aunt passed away, I inherited Chloe, her Bichon Frise. Although she is only 3 years old, my aunt tended to spoil her with table food so Chloe is very chubby. My aunt kept her clipped very short, but to me she looks like a footstool with an overstuffed body and skinny little legs. How often should I get her groomed to keep her looking fluffier?

A. To begin, my condolences for the loss of your aunt and Chloe's loss of her owner. I applaud you for adopting her precious pet and for wanting to learn about her care. With those dark eyes and black button nose framed by a fluffy white face, the Bichon is a captivating bundle of fun. Clean and non-shedding, it is intensely attached to its owner. I wish you many happy years together.

Your concerns about Chloe's weight problem should not just be about her appearance. Obesity in dogs is as serious a medical problem as it is in humans. Overweight dogs are at risk if they need surgery and those extra pounds place more stress on their heart, lungs, joints, liver and kidneys. Rewarding Chloe with food may have been your aunt's way of showing love and attention, and I'll bet the portly pup probably didn't get enough exercise either. You need to be more firm. This means never feeding her from your plate and putting her on a regimen of quality low-calorie dog food. You will both benefit and bond from walks and playtime every day.

A well-groomed Bichon Frise is a vision to behold, like spun sugar dancing on four little feet. You'll need to find a groomer who knows what the breed should look like with its fluffy head and neck blended into a rounded body on cylindrical legs. Unfortunately, some groomers still groom these dogs like Poodles. Ask to see photos of your prospective groomer's work.

Brush Chloe's coat a few times a week as it's growing out, using a slicker brush with curved wire bristles and taking care not to use too heavy a hand. Like most white-coated dogs, Bichons have extremely sensitive skin. As soon as you find the right groomer, Chloe will need professional styling every four to six weeks. Once she loses some weight and is properly groomed, no one will ever mistake her for a footstool again.