

## Spaying or Neutering Decreases Dogs' Risk for Disease

**Long-term studies show the health benefits of spaying or neutering your dog.**

*By Jon Geller, DVM*

Q. Some people tell me that dogs are healthier adults if they are spayed or neutered. Other folks tell me that dogs are healthier adults if they are left intact. Now I have heard that spaying or neutering versus leaving the dog intact doesn't really matter because most of the diseases that affect adult dogs come as a result of old age. Which is true?

A. Many long-term studies have compared health problems in dogs that are not spayed or neutered with those that are spayed or neutered. Without question, the consensus is that spaying and neutering your dog decreases the risk of future disease.

In females, spaying prevents mammary cancer, uterine cancer, ovarian cancer and uterine infections. In males, neutering prevents prostate cancer, testicular cancer and testicular infections, as well as other hormonally triggered cancers.

The downside of spaying and neutering is that dogs may tend to put on weight because they become more sedentary. It's important for dog owners to be aware of this, and offer an appropriate diet that's measured out as needed. Just as with people, adequate exercise is an important part of preventing obesity, as well.

On a similar note, it's important to spay or neuter your dog at a young age. Around 12 to 16 weeks old is the ideal age for the surgery. At this age, there's less pain and inflammation, and the recovery is quicker. There have been no documented long-term negative effects of early spaying and neutering.