

Try High-fiber Diet for Food-obsessed Dog

Smaller, more frequent meals will also help satisfy

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Q. My 9-year-old Whippet Athena is in great health, but I have trouble keeping her weight down. She seems to obsess about food! She licks her empty bowl frequently, and will steal her brother's food any chance she can. Her exercise endurance is a little decreased, but she is still quite agile and loves to play. She takes synthroid, but her TSH levels have been within normal limits since she started that. Any suggestions?

A. Dogs can develop obsessions just like people, especially as they get older. The No. 1 cause of increased appetite, weight gain, and decreased activity is low thyroid levels. Since Athena is already on thyroid medication and her thyroid levels are normal, we can rule out thyroid disease.

If Athena appears to be constantly hungry and obsesses about food, offer her a high-fiber weight-loss diet such as Hills' W/D. Increase the number of feedings throughout the day so she can satisfy her cravings without adding pounds.

Monitor her weight carefully. Weight gain in an older dog can worsen any developing arthritis, leading to decreased activity, further weight gain, and continuation of this painful cycle.