

Save Money on Your Dog's Vet Bills

Veterinary medical foundation offers tips on how to avoid costly vet visits.

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Dog health issues can cause pet owners a great deal of money in medical expenses. But, according to the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Foundation (CVMF), some ailments can be easily prevented or at least minimized.

In general, the ideal way to avoid pet health problems is through early detection and prevention. Arnold Goldman, DVM, president of the CVMF and director of the Connecticut State Animal Response Team, recommends twice-yearly physical exams after the age of seven.

"And always examine your pet regularly at home for lumps and other abnormalities," he added. "Weigh your pet regularly. Any changes should be reported to your veterinarian."

Below is a list compiled by the CVMF of the top reasons why pets and their owners visit the vet's office. The foundation has also provided tips on how to avoid making that costly trip.

1. **Motor vehicle trauma** Use a six foot leash — not a retractable lead — when outside, especially near roads. Do not rely on an electric fence as it may be inoperative when least expected. Do not rely on the belief that your dog will never leave the yard. According to the CVMF, it takes just one squirrel to lead to a serious injury, with trauma care costs potentially exceeding \$5,000.
2. **Arthritis** Keep dogs and cats lean as obesity can cause arthritis (as well as diabetes and other ailments). Avoid running with pets on pavement. Do not force dogs to perform outside their abilities. For example, Toy breeds cannot run for long distances alongside their owners.
3. **Gastroenteritis** Use a leash at all times. Do not allow pets to eat anything from off of the ground. Do not feed pets "people food." Do not allow dogs to make contact with another dog's stool or other places where parasites may be present.
4. **Skin Disease** Practice strict tick and flea control. When a dog has a history of skin disease, see a veterinarian early for preventive measures, such as antihistamines, to avoid more costly interventions later. See a veterinarian early for ear discomfort as ear disease is most often linked to allergic disease, according to the CVMF.
5. **Periodontal Disease** Start brushing dogs' teeth when they are puppies so they learn to accept the practice as normal. Brush teeth and gums. Seek regular professional dental cleanings from age two and up. According to the CVMF, 85 percent of dogs and cats have moderate to severe periodontal disease due to a lack of brushing and cleanings.
6. **Bloat** Feed pets two meals of a measured amount of food daily. Avoid exercising after eating. Beware of non-productive vomiting and abdominal distention, which are signs of bloat.

The Connecticut Veterinary Medical Foundation is associated with the Connecticut Veterinary Medical Association. The foundation is a nonprofit organization that aims to enhance the health and welfare of domestic animals.