

Celebrity Deals With Dogs' Obesity

Learn how a local celebrity dealt with her dogs' obesity.

Fans of Jillian Michaels, the tough-talking trainer on NBC's *The Biggest Loser*, know she doesn't like to hear excuses. So Michaels is the first to admit that she has not practiced what she preaches when it comes to Baxter, her beloved and overweight Chihuahua.

DogChannel.com spoke with Michaels about her plan to get Baxter back in shape. For starters, both will participate in Hills 2006 National PetFit Challenge. [Click here to learn more and to enter your dog.](#)

DC: How did Baxter become overweight when you're so focused on health? Jillian: I've made the same mistake that many other pet owners have made by giving Baxter too many treats. When I was busy and not spending as much time as I would have liked with Baxter, I would give him extra treats to show him that I love him. And I would give him whatever I was eating, including his favorite indulgence Greek meatballs! The people at my favorite Greek restaurant would always give me an extra meatball for Baxter because they knew that I loved to spoil him. But now I know that food does not equal love, even though it can be hard to say no to Baxter.

DC: How significant is the pet obesity problem in this country? Jillian: Just like many of their owners, a growing number of Americas pets are packing on the pounds. As many as 40 percent of American household pets are obese or overweight that's 48 million cats and dogs! And obesity in pets can contribute to a number of health problems just like it does in humans including arthritis, diabetes, and even a shortened life span. It can also hurt the human-animal bond when a pet is too overweight to participate in fun activities and doesn't have a lot of energy.

DC: What are the most significant changes you've made to Baxters diet and exercise plans? Jillian: I worked with my veterinarian, Dr. Kate Zapata, to create a personalized plan for Baxter that included changing his food to a low-fat, reduced calorie food called Hills Prescription Diet r/d and making sure he gets plenty of exercise. In the past month, we've been hiking together, and I've noticed some incredible changes already Baxter has lost about a pound! He's more playful, and when we go out, he's running and has a lot more energy than he did before.

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