

## Preventive Healthcare for Dogs

**Three simple ways you can make a difference in your dog's health.**

Posted: May 6, 2008, 5 a.m. EST

Because dogs can't provide for themselves when it comes to health and medical needs, it is up to their owners to look out for their well-being. Marty Becker, DVM, offers three simple ways to make a big difference in your dog's health.

1. According to the American Veterinary Medical Association, about 85 percent of dogs and cats 3 years or older have some evidence of periodontal disease. As with humans, periodontal disease has been associated with heart, liver, and kidney problems. "Untreated periodontal disease can lead to tooth loss and worse," Becker says. "The good news is that it's progressive, so early detection and treatment by your veterinarian and good daily at-home care makes a big difference." Owners should brush their dogs' teeth regularly, and veterinarians also recommend giving your dog dental treats.

2. "Obesity in pets causes a lot of the same problems that it does in people," Becker says. "An overweight pet is prone to a host of related problems including diabetes, mobility issues, and breathing and heart problems. Overweight cats can even develop skin conditions from not being able to groom themselves properly. The lives of overweight pets are often uncomfortable and shorter." Since dogs will typically eat whatever their owners feed them, it is up to the owners to provide their dogs with a healthy diet and exercise.

3. Whether it's for an illness or a regular checkup, take your dog to the vet for twice-yearly exams. Preventive care will lessen the likelihood that diseases will develop. Becker also reminds owners the importance having their pets tested annually for parasites, such as heartworms, fleas, and ticks.

These tips were provided by the maker of Greenies.