

How Nutrients Affect Your Dog

Do you know how nutrients impact your dogs health?

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Carbohydrates Carbohydrates, made up of sugar, starches, and dietary fiber (such as that found in grains and vegetables), provide energy and aid in glucose production. Glucose, in turn, is the most efficient source of energy for the body, Bartges says. Dogs use readily digestible sugars and starches for quick energy, Fascetti says. Or, they store them. If not entirely needed to meet the animals energy needs, carbohydrates are laid down as fat used at other times when energy is not as readily available, either during exercise or prolonged periods between meals, Fascetti explains. Dietary fibers help move food through the intestinal tract and provide bulk, helping an animal feel full without extra calories. Its unknown what insufficient carbohydrates can do, but excess carbohydrates are stored as fat and can lead to obesity. **Vitamins and Minerals** Vitamins and minerals contribute to many processes, including metabolic functions, energy production, electrolyte balance, and fluid balance, Fascetti says. Without enough vitamins and minerals, a dog could suffer from impaired organ function, fatigue, muscular weakness, poor growth, dry skin, hair loss, an impaired immune system, and poor skeletal formation. But be careful: Too many vitamins and minerals can cause a myriad of problems. These range from poor absorption of vitamins and minerals already present in the diet to skeletal abnormalities in growing dogs, kidney damage in dogs with reduced kidney function, liver damage, weight loss, reduced appetite, anemia, and other maladies.

Water Water: You might not think of it as such, but water is an essential nutrient, too. Water makes up about 60% of an adult dog and puppies contain even more! Water is extremely important, and death occurs more quickly with water deprivation (dehydration) than with nutritional deficiencies, Bartges notes. Besides drinking, dogs get water by ingesting protein, fats, and carbohydrates in food. From dog to dog, nutrients act in the same way to build tissue, muscle, and bone and to support body functions. But the proportions of each that your dog needs may differ from what your neighbors dog needs. If you think your dog could benefit from changes in his diet to balance his nutrient consumption, cut out the label on his bag of food, and make an appointment with your veterinarian.

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