

## Vitamin, Mineral, and Herbal Supplements

**A healthy dog needs his vitamins to stay in his best shape.**

Although vets disagree on the importance of supplementing a dogs diet, most dogs remain in good health on a nutritionally complete and balanced dog food and many may benefit from, or at least are not harmed by, certain supplements. For example, consider vitamin C. Unlike people, dogs can synthesize vitamin C in their bodies and may not benefit from a vitamin C supplement the way a person could. Some studies suggest, however, that vitamin C supplements may be useful to highly athletic and working dogs. Dogs who lack the ability to synthesize vitamin C could benefit from supplementation of this antioxidant vitamin. Some breeders believe that vitamin C supplementation helps maintain orthopedic health in giant breeds. When it comes to canine dietary supplements, dog owners and their veterinarians must consider many variables.

The best course of action is to talk to your vet about supplements and determine together if your dog is likely to have a particular deficiency, then supplement that deficiency specifically. Or, if you are interested in supplements to treat a chronic disorder like arthritis or allergies, be sure to tell your vet that you are considering this kind of addition to your dogs health regimen. Your vet may have new information about the safety and efficacy of supplements. For example, the FDA announced that certain substances previously available for dogs such as comfrey and kava kava may not be safe. Because your vet may have access to dog health news you don't hear about, it pays to ask before giving your dog a new supplement.

Until supplements are more closely regulated, follow these safety precautions:

Look for quality: Buy supplements from reputable manufacturers.

Follow directions: Always follow package directions for dosage. Don't base an estimate of your dogs doseage on how much of the supplement you take.

Adhere to animal specifications: Never give your dog a supplement packaged for a human or for a different type of animal. For instance, don't give a cat supplement to a dog, and vice versa. Accurate dosage matters when it comes to small animals.

Inform your vet: Always tell your vet if you are supplementing your dogs diet.

Herbs and supplements should be treated like any other medication or dietary change: if your dog experiences any sudden change in health or behavior, see your vet.

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