

## Feeding the Fluffy Bichon Frise

**Learn how to choose the best food for your Bichon.**

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**Main Courses** Dry food (kibble) is the least expensive commercial dog food. Its bulky and takes longer to eat than other foods, so your Bichon may feel fuller after a meal. Unmoistened dry food must be chewed rather than gulped; this promotes dental health by reducing plaque accumulation and massaging the gums. On the downside, dry food takes up more storage space than other types of dog food. It must be stored in a cool, dry, vermin-proof environment. Because increased water intake can help prevent urinary stones, unmoistened dry food is not usually recommended for Bichons at risk for developing this disorder.

Canned food is a highly palatable, rather concentrated source of energy. Its a good appetite-booster for an underweight dog or one that's recovering from an illness. Feeding canned food is an easy way to increase the water intake of a Bichon that's prone to urinary stones. Canned food is more expensive than dry food, but this isn't a major concern, given the Bichons small size. Canned food stores easily, but must be refrigerated after opening, because it spoils rapidly at room temperature.

The advantages of frozen food are similar to those of canned products. Frozen food is usually more expensive than canned. Its easily stored, provided you have adequate freezer space, but can't be kept indefinitely. Unlike other forms of dog food, frozen food is available in both cooked and raw forms.

**Juniors and Seniors** Bichon puppies grow and develop rapidly, going from newborn to adult in less than a year, so their nutritional needs are different from those of adults. Maintaining a good body condition is most important, Dr. Bartges says. Important specific nutrients include protein, calcium-and-phosphorous balance, and the caloric density of the diet.

Protein is a critical nutrient for puppies because its essential for muscle and bone growth and repair. Puppy food usually contains at least 27 percent protein, compared to about 21 percent for standard adult dog food. Puppies also need lots of energy pound for pound, they burn more calories than adult dogs. That doesn't mean its okay to let your Bichon puppy eat as much as it wantsit still needs only enough calories to supply its energy needs. Additional calories will just make your Bichon fat and could lead to serious health problems later in life.

Puppies also need the correct amounts of calcium and phosphorus to ensure proper skeletal development and growth.

Because puppies have small stomachs and high metabolic rates, they need to eat several times a dayif they don't, they'll not only run out of energy, they won't take in adequate amounts of protein and other nutrients. A puppy less that 3 months of age should be fed at least four times a day. The number of meals can be reduced to three per day when the puppy is 3 to 5 months old. A 6-month-old puppy will usually be ready for an adult feeding schedule of one to two meals per day.