

Healthy Dog Treats

You don't have to forego treats to keep your dog healthy and prevent obesity.

W. Jean Dodds, DVM

The frequency and type of treats you give your dog can increase the risk of obesity or compound an existing obesity problem. The following suggestions are alternatives to help overweight dogs shed pounds and become healthier:

Keep a container of green beans in the freezer: If it comes from the hand, the dog will consider it a treat, and it has fewer calories than a cookie. Popcorn and kibble are also good low-calorie treat alternatives.

Cook vegetables in a low-calorie, low-sodium butter substitute or bouillon to provide an attractive aroma and taste.

Break biscuits and treats down and give a smaller piece at a time: The timing of the treat and positive reinforcement is what's most important to a dog, not the size of the offering.

Limit treats to 10 percent of the dog's daily caloric intake: If a treat is given for going outside, eliminate the cookie the dog gets at the bank's drive-up window.

Offer a piece of dog food from the table; the dog will still see it as table scraps, but it will be without the fat and cholesterol.

Keep a treat diary or daily treat checklist so family members don't give multiple treats.

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