

Your Dogs Vet Visits Are Necessary

Ten reasons your puppy needs to visit a vet.

Arnold Plotnick

Raising a puppy can be a magical experience. Few things can equal the joy of playing with and nurturing your puppy as you watch him mature into a noble companion. To maximize the chances of successfully completing puppyhood, you must keep abreast of your puppy's health. That means getting top-notch veterinary care. Here are 10 reasons your puppy must see a veterinarian.

First Things First

A good, routine physical exam is quite possibly the most important thing you can do for your puppy. A puppy should be examined as soon as possible after you bring him home, preferably within 48 hours, to be certain that no infectious or genetic diseases are present. Your veterinarian will ask you all sorts of questions about your puppy's diet, appetite, thirst, attitude and whether you have noticed any health complaints or have any concerns. After that, he or she will conduct a thorough physical exam from head to tail. If your puppy is declared healthy by your veterinarian, the pediatric vaccination series is ready to begin.

Your Best Shot

A wide variety of dangerous and potentially deadly infectious diseases can affect your puppy. Vaccinations are necessary to protect against them. One of the most important vaccinations is a combination vaccine (often called the 4-in-1 shot), which protects against distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza and parvovirus. Ideally, I believe all puppies, if healthy, should begin their pediatric vaccinations at 6 weeks of age. A follow-up vaccination should be given three weeks later, and every three weeks thereafter, until the age of 15 or 16 weeks. One year later, another vaccination (a booster) is usually given. Recent studies have shown that excellent immunity can be provided in the future if the 4-in-1 vaccinations are given every three years thereafter. The next most important vaccine is for rabies. All puppies 12 weeks and older should receive a rabies vaccination. A rabies booster is usually given one year later, and every three years thereafter. Vaccinations against other diseases, such as leptospirosis, kennel cough and Lyme disease may or may not be advisable, depending on your puppy's lifestyle. Discuss which combinations of vaccines work best for your puppy with your veterinarian.