

Buy a Healthy Puppy

Six simple steps to help you choose a healthy, happy new puppy.

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Taking your new puppy home should be a joyous occasion, but its anything but if he gets sick and spends those first few days at the veterinary hospital.

1. Where does he live? Begin by checking the conditions where the puppy lives. Puppy quarters should be clean, warm, and dry. Sure, the puppy may be soiling the area, but there should not be an accumulation of feces, extensive soggy areas, a pronounced odor, and it should not be an otherwise dirty or grimy area. Puppys bedding, water and food bowls should be clean, too. Dirty living quarters suggest the pups are not receiving the best care. 2. Closely examine the puppy. Advises Lila Miller, DVM, Vice President ASPCA and Veterinary Advisor, The puppy should be bright, alert, responsive when approached or called, and playful, not lethargic or depressed. 3. Look at the puppys overall well-being. The puppy should be well-fleshed and not too thin or pot-bellied, Miller says. His coat should be smooth and clean with no hair missing or lesions on the skin. Gums should be pink, the ears should be odor-free, and the eyes and nose have no discharge.

4. Check his hearing. Clap your hands behind your puppys head (near his ears), and out of his line of vision. If he does not react, he may be deaf or hearing impaired. 5. Look for warning signs. Be wary of any litter that contains a puppy who is very thin, has a scruffy coat, scratches a lot, is coughing, or has fecal material caked under his tail, Miller says. These are signs that something is amiss with the youngster, and if one puppy is infected, other puppies in the litter may soon follow.

6. Educate yourself. Read up on puppy care before you look at puppies, Miller suggests. Ask questions about puppys appetite, vaccinations, deworming history, and if there any health problems. Its easy to fall in love with the first puppy you see, but if a puppys health is in question, back off and look somewhere else.

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