

How often do I feed my puppy?

By 6 weeks of age puppies are eating solid food. A reputable breeder will not usually let the pup come home with you until at least 8 weeks of age, so your pup is well weaned and established fully on a solids diet.

Weigh your puppy regularly (fortnightly minimum) especially in the larger breeds to help guide you in increasing the food amount.

Here is a rough guide to how often to feed your pup:

- **8 - 14 weeks.** Feed your pup either or if a large pup breed 4 times a day.
 - This is not a hard and fast rule, but the principle behind this is that your pup is burning energy at a fast pace as they are growing so fast at this age.
 - Their stomachs are small and you don't want to overfeed your pup and cause bloat.
 - Smaller, high quality food given often allows your pup to take in the most nutrition from the meal, use the carbohydrates easily and not be too full.
 - If you work all day, it is still fairly easy to give the pup a meal in the morning, then one immediately on arriving home and a small meal in the later evening.
- **14 - 26 weeks.** Your pup is still growing fast, but the digestive system is also maturing and you should cut back to 3 meals per day now if you were giving 4, and they can be gradually increased in size.
- **6 months - 1 year.** Your pup will reach his adult frame size during this period, even though many breeds don't really fill out and mature for anything up to another year.
 - Without feeding less per day than you were, cut back to giving the food in 2 meals per day.
 - It's a good idea to let the pup wake up and have 10 - 20 minutes outside exercising and toileting before this meal in the morning
 - Feed the later meal during the late afternoon but not late at night.
- **1 year and after**
 - if your pup is a large breed, you will find it better to continue for another 6 months or so feeding twice per day
 - small dog breeds may now be taken down to once a day.

It is useful to make the changes in number of meals per day over a period of a few days or a week.

For example if you are changing from 3 meals per day to 2, start giving only a little more food in the 2 meal times you are going to continue with, and start to make the

other meal smaller until after a few days you are no longer offering that meal.

BEWARE - do not just feed your puppy however much he seems to want whenever he seems hungry - a puppy will suffer more from obesity and bones being forced to grow too fast, than from not getting quite enough to eat!

How much do I feed my puppy?

Firstly we need to consider what breed of puppy you are feeding, so use the table below to guide you. It is highly recommended however that you take advice from your puppies breeder and your vet concerning your exact breed of puppy and how the puppy is growing and developing.

The best rule to follow if you are unsure is: if there is any food left after 15 - 20 minutes, take it away and offer a slightly smaller meal next time. You puppy should eat all you offer quickly, or you are probably offering a bit too much.

The following table is a guide for the maximum to feed your dog as an adult, and a guide to feeding your puppy til adult weight.

Pups needs will depend also on how active your puppy is, and the calorie levels in your chosen foods - do check the information on the packaging before feeding.

Substitute half the dry food for other commercial foods at the same volume, or with fresh and raw food at the same volume

BREED SIZE	ADULT	PUP FEEDING REGIME
Miniature	3/4 - 1 cup per day	1/2 to 3/4 cup per day maximum by age of 6 months.
Toy	1 cup per day	1/2 - 1 cup per day maximum by age of 6 months.
Small	1 - 2 cups per day	1 cup per day increasing to 2 cups maximum by age of 6 - 10 months
Medium	2 - 3 cups per day	1 cup per day increasing to 2 cups by age 8 months, and increasing to 3 cups maximum by 18 months
Large	2 - 4 cups per day	The large breeds have the greatest variation in food amount mostly because of activity levels. A large breed dog that is not very active can become extremely obese quite quickly, and it always takes far more effort to get that weight off again.

Vegetables and cereals are higher in carbohydrates than meats, however canned and processed foods can have a high carbohydrate content so check carefully. Protein

provides a longer lasting energy source without the spiking caused by sugars.

Reading labels on dog food

Everyone will recommend different brands of dog food, so get used to reading the labels for yourself.

- Meat in the foods must be specified - beware of listings such as "animal", "animal products" or "meat". Look for listings such as "beef" or "chicken" as they will only be by-products if not specified and are low in nutritional value.
- Beware of fillers in the dog food such as:
 - high corn content - corn has a high glycemic index, is not highly digestible and the corn used will be of the lowest grade. You don't have to completely avoid corn at all costs, just beware that it is a very cheap ingredient and a cheap dry dog food may be cheap because of the high corn content.
 - high grain content - again grains used in dog food are of the lowest grade and are very cheap for the manufacturer to purchase. There are many studies that link high grain content kibbles with skin irritations in dogs.
 - high brewers rice content - this is a cheap rice by-product with no real nutritional value
 - high salt or sugar content
 - high preservative and dye content

So what is good?

- Actual meat that is specified
- Vegetables

It cannot be stressed enough that you ensure your puppy and adult dog always has access to plenty of fresh, clean water. Remember too that dry food is just that and your puppy may drink surprisingly large quantities of water.