



## CANINE LIFE STAGE: MATURE ADULT

So, you just used the AAHA Canine Life Stage Calculator to determine that your dog is in the mature adult stage of life. Congrats! Knowing your dog's life stage helps you provide a lifetime of optimal care.

A dog's life can be divided into four stages: puppy, young adult, mature adult, and senior. The stages are based on a dog's maturation and aging process. Because dogs evolve as they mature, they require different approaches to healthcare as they progress from puppy to senior pet. In fact, there are at least 10 health-related factors based on age, size, lifestyle, health status, and breed that your veterinary team regularly assesses to keep your dog healthy, happy, and safe.

When you understand your dog's life stage, you and your veterinary team become partners in providing your dog with an individualized healthcare approach to every veterinary visit. The end result: a lifetime of optimal care your dog needs and deserves!

### MATURE ADULT DOG CARE 101

A mature adult dog has different needs than a puppy, young adult, or senior dog. Good preventive healthcare and at least semi-annual to annual physical exams will put your dog on track to a long and healthy life.

If your dog is a working or service dog, they may require more frequent veterinary visits as a result of their job and genetics. Together, you and the veterinary team can develop a plan to maintain your dog's optimum health and specific physical abilities.

During your mature adult dog's veterinary visits, your veterinarian will take your dog's temperature and check their body and muscle condition, skin, eyes, ears, nose, mouth, heart, lungs, gastrointestinal system, urinary system, brain, nerves, bones, joints, and lymph nodes. Tell your veterinarian about your dog's mobility and activity at home to help detect early signs of orthopedic disease and arthritis.

Below are some topics you'll want to discuss with the veterinary team that are specific to your dog's mature adult life stage.



## YOUR MATURE ADULT DOG'S LIFESTYLE AND SAFETY

Your mature adult dog still wants to run, play, and explore! Talk to your veterinarian about how much exercise your dog needs and ways to enrich their environment and keep them safely occupied. Discuss how to keep your dog safe by identifying potential hazards inside, outside, and when traveling.

All dogs, regardless of their life stage, have to travel safely and with minimal stress. Call your veterinarian prior to your dog's visit to learn how to acclimate your dog to travel and determine the most effective way to transport them for their visit.

## INFECTIONS BETWEEN HUMANS AND ANIMALS

Infections transmitted between humans and animals are called zoonoses. They are transmitted in different ways, such as bites, raw food and feces. Prevent infections from spreading between your dog and your human family members by letting the veterinary team know if there are children, elderly, or immune-compromised family members who may have exposure to your dog.

## MATURE ADULT DOG BEHAVIOR

Behavior problems are a common reason dogs are relinquished or euthanized. Your veterinarian is the best resource for accurate and current information regarding your dog's behavior. At your mature adult dog's veterinary visit, be prepared to discuss the following:

- How does your dog act and play?
- Has your dog developed undesirable behaviors, like jumping or barking?
- Has your dog developed any fears?
- Is your dog exhibiting any breed-specific behaviors, like digging or herding?
- Has your dog shown aggressive or unruly behavior?
- Have you noticed any changes in your dog's relationship with you, family members, other animals, or people?
- Does your dog seem antisocial or "grumpy"?

Share any behavior concerns you have about your dog's cognition (i.e., mental awareness or attitude). Many issues can be addressed and corrected by integrating medical, dietary, or pain management. If training is needed, your veterinary team can help you select appropriate trainers and classes.



## **YOUR MATURE ADULT DOG'S NUTRITION**

More than 50% of dogs suffer from obesity and obesity-related conditions. Maintaining an ideal weight keeps your dog active and bright—excess calories lead to excess weight and poor muscle condition, making it difficult to move aging joints. Your veterinarian will establish a target weight range based on your dog's current weight and muscle condition.

Also, your dog may develop a medical condition that is effectively managed by food with specific nutrient levels. While many people have opinions on the best food for dogs, veterinarians have the most medical training when it comes to your dog's nutrition. Work with your veterinarian to choose a quality food with targeted nutrition based on your dog's breed, size, and needs.

If you are thinking of or are already using supplements, like CBD, talk with your veterinarian so they can help you make the safest choices for your pet.

## **PARASITES AND MATURE ADULT DOGS**

Your mature adult dog needs to be protected against parasites. A year-round medicine to prevent intestinal parasites should be continued as part of your dog's healthcare plan. Remember, parasites are found in your dog's feces and can be transmitted to humans, so talk to your veterinarian about how to keep everyone in your home safe. Also, keep your mature adult dog's heartworm preventive and flea and tick control up-to-date. Expect annual testing for tick-borne infection, heartworm disease, and intestinal parasites at your veterinary visit.

## **VACCINATIONS FOR MATURE ADULT DOGS**

Vaccination is a crucial component to preventive medicine in dogs during all life stages. Vaccinations keep your dog's immune system strong to fight against infection. Several vaccines were likely administered routinely throughout your dog's life as the primary defense against serious infectious illnesses. Depending on your dog's vaccine history, lifestyle changes, and risk of exposure to disease, your veterinarian may adjust your dog's vaccine schedule. Antibody titer testing to determine protection from a few specific viral infections may be suggested. Your veterinarian will advise which vaccines are necessary to keep your dog healthy.

## **YOUR MATURE ADULT DOG'S TEETH**

Yes, an adult dog can have a healthy mouth and good breath! Periodontal disease can be prevented through regular dental examinations by your veterinarian and proper home care. If left untreated, periodontal disease can lead to chronic pain, infection, and poor quality of life for your dog. Because so many dogs are affected by dental and periodontal

disease, your veterinarian will perform an oral exam during your visit so a dental plan can be designed and discussed. The plan may require anesthesia to obtain X-rays to further evaluate and treat periodontal disease. If you have concerns about anesthesia, tell your veterinary team! They are happy to answer any questions and explain the risks associated with nonanesthetic dentistry.

It's never too late to talk about home dental care. Find out about dental products approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council ([vohc.org](http://vohc.org)) that can help maximize your dog's lifelong health.

## **YOUR MATURE ADULT DOG'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

Your veterinarian will perform a thorough reproductive exam, regardless if your dog is spayed, neutered, or intact. It's important to check out your dog's prostate, mammary glands, and other reproductive organs to ensure they are in good health. If you breed your dog, discuss breeding frequency and practices as well.

## **BREED-SPECIFIC INFORMATION FOR MATURE ADULT DOGS**

There are breed-specific health concerns that can affect your mature adult dog's quality of life. If your dog is a mixed-breed, consider DNA testing to determine risk factors for breed-specific diseases. At your visit, your veterinarian will want to continue to screen for cancer and orthopedic, kidney, liver, heart, gland, and eye abnormalities that may be breed-related. Early detection is one of the most effective ways to keep your dog healthy and happy!

Understanding your mature adult dog's unique needs is the first step to providing a lifetime of care that will lead to a happy and healthy canine companion.

### **Looking for a veterinarian for your dog?**

Find an AAHA-accredited veterinary practice by using the Hospital Locator at [aaha.org/locate](http://aaha.org/locate).

