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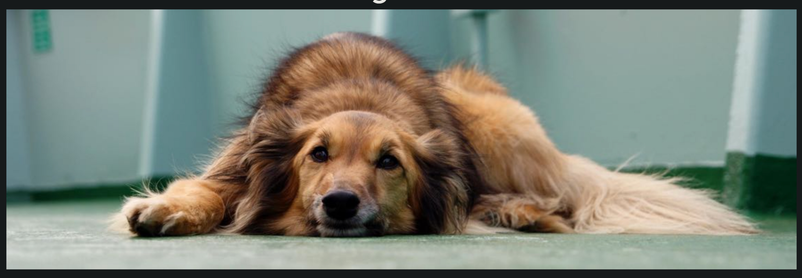
WELLNESS #expert q&as; #health

How to Care for a Sick Dog



When your dog is sick, you want to comfort her in every way possible. But how do you know that you're doing all the right things? We talked to Dr. Dani McVety, a veterinarian and co-founder of the veterinary hospice Lap of Love, to find out exactly what pet parents can do to help their sick dogs feel better.

Q: What are some signs that I should take my dog to the vet?
Dr. McVety: Dogs will generally show some signs that things aren't completely perfect. Most commonly, they will either seek you out more than usual, or hide more than usual.

We now have some evidence that their facial expressions change as well. The eyes may be more squinted, tail tucked under, posture lower than normal. These all vary by breed of course, but note a significant deviation from the normal. As a veterinarian, I remind my clients that they know their pet's personality better than anyone.

Q: How can I make it easier for my dog to take her pills?
Dr. McVety: Giving your dog pills can be very frustrating! The human animal bond might be injured if the owner is frustrated with giving the medication, and the pet is running away. Hiding the pill in peanut butter, pill pouches, wet dog food, or even dissolving it in chicken broth [make sure the broth contains no onion and your vet says the pills are okay to dissolve] are some ideas to help make medication time a little easier. If you find the right combination, it could actually be a positive experience.

Q: Are certain foods or treats extra comforting to a sick dog?
Dr. McVety: This certainly depends on the type of disease the pet has. Low-sodium chicken broth is necessary for any kind of kidney issues, and there are some subconscious caring feelings that occur when we give our own dog chicken noodle soup! Otherwise, single protein and simple carbohydrate meals will be the gentlest on a pet's stomach. For example, chicken and plain rice.

Q: If my dog isn't feeling well, is there a special kind of bed I can buy for snuggling?
Dr. McVety: This is hit and miss with pets. Sometimes they will seek out comfortable, fluffy things to sleep on. Many times dogs will find cool places, like tile floors, to sleep on when they aren't feeling well. There are some dog beds that are very cooling to the touch, but many find that the more they spend on the dog bed, the less the dog actually uses it! I have found many of my clients appreciate the use of a baby crib mattress. These are many times impermeable to urine, which makes clean up easy!

Q: Is there any reason to wrap my dog in a blanket or give him a sweater to wear?
Dr. McVety: This is a good idea for smaller dogs or cats that are shivering. The shivering does not always mean they're cold; sometimes it's more of a sign of anxiety. And just like [an anxiety vest], the physical pressure on their body can help them feel more comfortable and protected.

Q: How can I make sure my sick pup stays well hydrated?
Dr. McVety: Multiple water bowls around the house will help your pet make shorter trips to get a drink. Low-sodium chicken broth can encourage them to drink more when it's really needed. You can ask your veterinarian for subcutaneous fluids as well. This is easy to do at home, and requires an IV bag that delivers the hydration under the skin. This is one of the more effective ways at reversing dehydration.

Q: When is it OK to take my under-the-weather dog for walks again?
Dr. McVety: Animals have a fantastic inner compass. If he wants to go outside and take a short walk, most of the time that's OK as long as your veterinarian has approved it. If an animal should remain completely immobilized, many times they should remain at the hospital.

By following Dr. McVety's advice, you can be an extra-loving caregiver. Remember, the best thing for your dog is his pet parent's presence. So the next time your dog's sick, stock up on the comforting items, including Milk-Bone® Pill Pouches, and surround him with lots of TLC.

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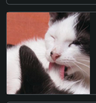

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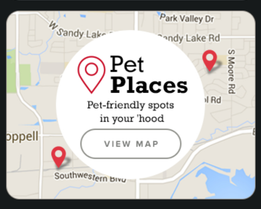

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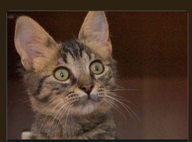

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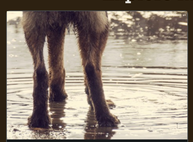

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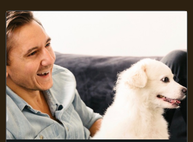

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