



APONC HEALTH NEWSLETTER

SEPTEMBER 2024 ISSUE

In this Issue

As we move into Fall, The Health Committee's September issue focuses on "Growth, Exercise and Feeding Puppies."

We have 2 articles from AKC that provide guidance on the "do's and don'ts with your puppy."

- *When does a Puppy Finish Growing?*
- *Teaching your Puppy to Jump*

We hope you enjoy reading these articles and learn some important techniques to exercise your puppy safely.

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PUPPY GROWTH CHART: WHEN DOES MY PUPPY FINISH GROWING?

Key Points

- Some puppies continue growing up until 24 months
- Larger dog breeds take longer to reach full adult size than smaller breeds
- Puppies require the right amount of food and exercise (not too much or too little) to stay healthy

Puppies seem to grow up so fast. One day, they're little balls of furry cuteness and, in what seems like the blink of an eye, they're fully grown into loving canine companions. But not all dogs grow at the same rate, with smaller breed dogs growing up much faster than their larger counterparts. That's because those bigger bones and joints need a bit more time to grow and develop.

Puppies, especially those of a larger breed, have special dietary and exercise requirements to consider while they are still growing. And, once pups are fully grown, you'll know just how big or small they will be so you can buy them all the essential dog supplies they'll need in the correct sizes, like crates, collars, beds, and protective jackets. That's why it's so important to know just when your puppy finishes growing.

Puppy Growth Chart By Percentage

All numbers are approximate. Consult your veterinarian if in doubt. (continued on next page)

	Small (0-20 lbs)	Medium (21-50 lbs)	Large (51-100 lbs)	X-Large (100+ lbs)
6 months	75% fully grown	66%	60%	50%
9 months	90%	85%	75%	65%
12 months	100%	95%	85%	80%
15 months	100%	100%	95%	90%
18 months	100%	100%	100%	100%

How Long Do Puppies Grow?

Although all puppies are officially considered adult dogs once they reach one year old, puppies continue to grow in height and size while their bones are still developing, which takes anywhere from 6 to 24 months. Their skeletal growth is what determines how tall they will become as adults.

“The long bones in a puppy’s legs grow from two distinct places called growth plates, according to Dr. Jerry Klein, DVM and Chief Veterinary Officer at AKC. “The growth plates are somewhat flexible and soft during puppyhood when new tissue is being formed.”

As your pooch grows, the new tissue developed hardens into bone. “When the growth plates have stopped producing new tissue and become completely calcified, they are said to have ‘closed,’ which means that they’ve stopped growing and the bone has reached its final size,” says Dr. Klein.

Keep in mind, even after the bones are fully developed, your puppy will continue to develop fat and muscle, just as human adults do.

When Do Smaller Puppy Breeds Finish Growing?

Small and medium puppy breeds grow up pretty quickly. In fact, those petite puppies finish growing at around half the age of their larger counterparts, according to Dr. Klein. “On average, small breeds typically stop growing by the time they reach 6 to 8 months of age.”

Medium breed puppies might take just a bit longer to grow, reaching their adult size at around 12 months of age.

When Do Larger Puppy Breeds Finish Growing?

A larger dog takes a bit more time than a smaller one to reach full adult size because those bigger bones need more time to grow. “Giant breed puppies grow until they are 12 to 18 months old,” says Dr. Klein.

Large to giant breed pups usually weigh 70 or more pounds as adults. In some cases, very large pups like mastiffs may even reach their fully grown size at 24 months of age.

When Do Purebred Puppies Finish Growing?

If you’ve recently acquired a purebred AKC-registered puppy, then the breeder can let you know how large your pup will get and the approximate growth rate based on their experience with other members of the pup’s family tree.

“Purebred dogs are known first and foremost for their predictability: predictability of size, coat, temperament, etc.,” says Dr. Klein. “Granted, there will be variances within members of each breed (and each litter), but generally speaking, the breed can certainly help determine final size at adulthood.”

When Do Mixed-Breed Dogs Finish Growing?

For pups who aren’t purebred, determining their growth rate is a little tricky. “Unfortunately, when dealing with a dog of unknown heritage, it becomes a bit of a guessing game as to determining the final size,” says Dr. Klein. This is especially true for younger puppies between 6 and 10 weeks of age.

“A helpful hint is that if you run your hands down a dog’s rib cage and you can still feel the ‘knobs’ of the ribs, that dog will probably continue to grow in height,” recommends Dr. Klein. That’s because these “knobs” are the growth plates of the ribs that are still developing.

How Do I Feed a Growing Puppy?

Foods that meet the nutritional guidelines set up by the Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) and are specifically designed for all life stages will provide your developing pup all

the nutrition they need. These foods also don't require a transition onto an adult-specific food when pups are fully grown.

"Those foods designated for 'all life stages' mean that they meet needs of both growing and adult animals," according to Dr. Klein. You'll also find puppy-specific foods that ensure your pooch gets all the nutrients she needs, but you'll only want to feed those until adulthood — around 11 to 14 months of age.

Most importantly, always follow the guidelines on the food when feeding your puppy so the pooch doesn't become overweight. "It is known that obesity in puppies can lead to a predisposition of future orthopedic issues later in life, such as hip dysplasia, so a fit, leaner puppy is considered preferable to a chubby older puppy," warns Dr. Klein.

How do I Feed Large and Giant Breed Puppies?

Too much calcium in your large or giant breed puppy's diet isn't good for their development, warns Dr. Klein. "This is because large and giant breeds are more sensitive than smaller ones to an excess or shortage of calcium while their bones are growing," says Dr. Klein.

When shopping for puppy food for your large-breed pooch, look for pet food labels that read "[Pet Food Name] is formulated to meet the nutritional levels established by the AAFCO Dog Food Nutrient Profiles for growth or all life stages including growth of large-size dogs (70 lbs or more as an adult)," recommends Dr. Klein.

How Do I Exercise Growing Puppies Safely?

Puppies are little balls of energy who need exercise to stay healthy, but too much exercise isn't good for puppies. "It is imperative to know that excessive, prolonged activity, like jogging, can be extremely detrimental on the bones and joints of growing puppies," warns Dr. Klein.

"This is why it is never recommended to do road work or jogging on a dog less than 14 to 18 months of age, especially large and giant breeds, until the growth plates have fully fused," says Dr. Klein. Instead, walk moderately short distances of a quarter-mile or less on softer surfaces like grass or sand until your dog has finished growing.

Is It Safe for Puppies to Jump?

Do you have a jumping puppy on your hands? While most dogs are capable of jumping several times their own height, it doesn't mean they always should.

Puppies shouldn't be asked to jump in extreme or competitive situations until they're at least 12-15 months old (or older for giant/slow-maturing breeds). This is because puppy growth plates aren't closed until at least 12 months of age and jumping on open growth plates can cause long term damage. Additionally, young dogs don't have the benefit of muscle to cushion the impact of a jump, as adult dogs have. Therefore, it's also important to limit your young dogs jumping in day to day activities, like jumping on beds, over baby gates, and out of the car.

Teaching Dogs to Jump Safely

While dogs must be at least 15 months of age to compete in Agility, there is no reason to wait to introduce your dog to the sport. Even young puppies can benefit from age-appropriate agility training and preparation.

The best way to approach training a puppy for Agility is to follow the motto "low and slow." If you have any concerns about what your puppy can handle, speak to your veterinarian.

Dogs that jump in competitions such as Agility, Obedience, or Flyball, are taught the proper form to jump efficiently so as to cause the least stress possible on their joints. This is done through exercises like jump grids and conditioning.

Jump grids are lines of jumps set at different angles and distances that dogs learn to negotiate at speed. Dogs start jump grids with jump heights very low, or even with jump bars on the ground, and gradually work up to their full jump height as they get stronger and more confident.

Conditioning exercises can be as simple as hiking in the woods and jumping over sticks and logs or as complex as concentrated strength and balance exercises using canine fitness equipment.

So when you enroll in a beginning agility class or try agility at an AKC My Dog Can Do That! event, keep in mind that your dog won't be jumping maximum height jumps. Not because the trainers doubt his ability, but because it's much safer to teach him the proper way to jump first.