



Pet obesity: *Get a handle* on health risks

Too many calories and not enough exercise can pack a few pounds on pets—and tipping the scales puts our furry friends at a greater risk of developing health problems. Luckily, many obesity-related diseases can be delayed or prevented by keeping pets in a healthy weight range.

Pets are considered overweight when their weight is 15 percent or more above ideal and obese when their weight is 30 percent or more above ideal. Your veterinarian can assess your pet's body condition and gauge if weight loss is necessary—and work with you to develop a strategy if your pet needs to drop a few pounds.

Here are a few reasons to keep your four-legged family members lean and trim:

- > Excess weight places stress on the joints and can lead to **joint pain**, **arthritis** and **ligament injuries**.
- > Overweight and obese dogs are often at risk of developing **insulin resistance** and **diabetes**. Diabetes has also been associated with obesity in cats.
- > Obesity and a high-fat diet can trigger **pancreatitis**, an inflammatory condition of the pancreas.
- > **High blood pressure** is often seen in animals that are obese or overweight and can lead to other secondary complications, such as kidney and eye diseases.
- > **Respiratory distress** and **exercise intolerance** is commonly seen in pets carrying extra pounds.
- > Overweight and obese dogs and cats typically have **shorter lifespans** than their leaner counterparts.