

🐾 Healthy Weight, Happy Pet: Your Guide to Pet Weight Loss 🐾

Losing weight can significantly improve your pet's quality of life, energy levels, and overall health! This handout is a simple guide to help you manage your pet's weight at home.

⌚ Setting the Stage: Understanding Ideal Weight

Your veterinarian is the best resource for determining your pet's **ideal body weight** and setting safe, realistic goals.

- **Body Condition Score (BCS):** Your vet uses a scoring system (usually from 1 to 9) to assess how much fat your pet is carrying. A goal weight will be based on achieving a BCS of **4 or 5** (for dogs and cats).
- **Target Weight:** Be sure to ask your veterinary team for the specific number of pounds or kilograms your pet needs to lose and the recommended time frame.

🥣 The Food Factor: A Closer Look at Calories

Weight loss fundamentally comes down to taking in fewer calories than your pet burns.

🏃 Get Moving: Exercise for Both Dogs and Cats

Increasing activity burns calories, builds muscle, and is great for your pet's mental health! **Always start slowly** and check with your vet about the appropriate type and amount of exercise for your pet's specific health needs.

🐶 For Dogs:

- **Structured Walks:** Aim for multiple walks per day. Focus on a brisk pace for a certain duration (e.g., 20 minutes) rather than just a casual sniff.
- **Playtime:** Fetch, tug-of-war, or swimming are great calorie burners.
- **Stairs/Hills:** Walking up inclines or stairs can intensify a workout.

🐱 For Cats:

- **Interactive Toys:** Use wand toys, laser pointers (don't shine them directly in their eyes!), and feather dancers to encourage jumping and running.
- **Feeding Toys (Puzzles):** Use puzzle balls or slow-feeder bowls to make your cat "work" for their food. This burns a few extra calories and provides mental enrichment.
- **Vertical Space:** Encourage climbing by installing cat trees or wall shelves.

Step	Action	Why It Matters
1. The Diet Plan	Use only the specific Veterinary Weight Management Diet recommended by your vet.	These foods are scientifically formulated to be low in calories but high in essential nutrients and fiber to help your pet feel full.
2. Precise Portions	Use a measuring cup or kitchen scale to measure out every meal exactly as prescribed by your vet.	"Eyeballing" portions can easily add hundreds of extra calories per day, sabotaging the weight loss effort. A kitchen scale is the most accurate tool.
3. The Treat Trap	Treats must be part of the total daily calorie count. Ask your vet for low-calorie treat options and for the total number of calories your pet is allowed per day.	Many popular treats are surprisingly high in calories. Consider using a portion of their daily kibble as treats instead.
4. Stop the Sharing	Do not feed your pet any human food, scraps, or table foods (even small amounts).	Human foods are typically high in fat and calories, and can also upset your pet's stomach.



Tracking and Follow-Up: Staying on Course

Weight loss is a marathon, not a sprint. Consistency is key!

- **The Weight-In:** Schedule regular weigh-ins at the veterinary clinic (e.g., every 2-4 weeks) to monitor progress. This helps the team adjust the feeding amount if needed.
- **Keep a Log:** Track the amount of food fed, all treats given, and daily exercise. This will help you and your vet troubleshoot if weight loss slows down.
- **Celebrate Small Wins:** Focus on positive changes, such as your pet having more energy, running further, or breathing easier.

Remember: Your veterinary team is your partner in this journey! Never make changes to your pet's diet or exercise plan without consulting them first.