

## **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 danciers 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
<b>1. The Diet Plan</b>	Use only the specific <b>Veterinary Weight Management Diet</b> 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.
<b>2. Precise Portions</b>	Use a <b>measuring cup or kitchen scale</b> to measure out <b>every meal</b> 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.
<b>3. The Treat Trap</b>	Treats must be part of the total daily calorie count. Ask your vet for <b>low-calorie treat options</b> 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.
<b>4. Stop the Sharing</b>	<b>Do not feed your pet any human food, scraps, or table foods</b> (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.