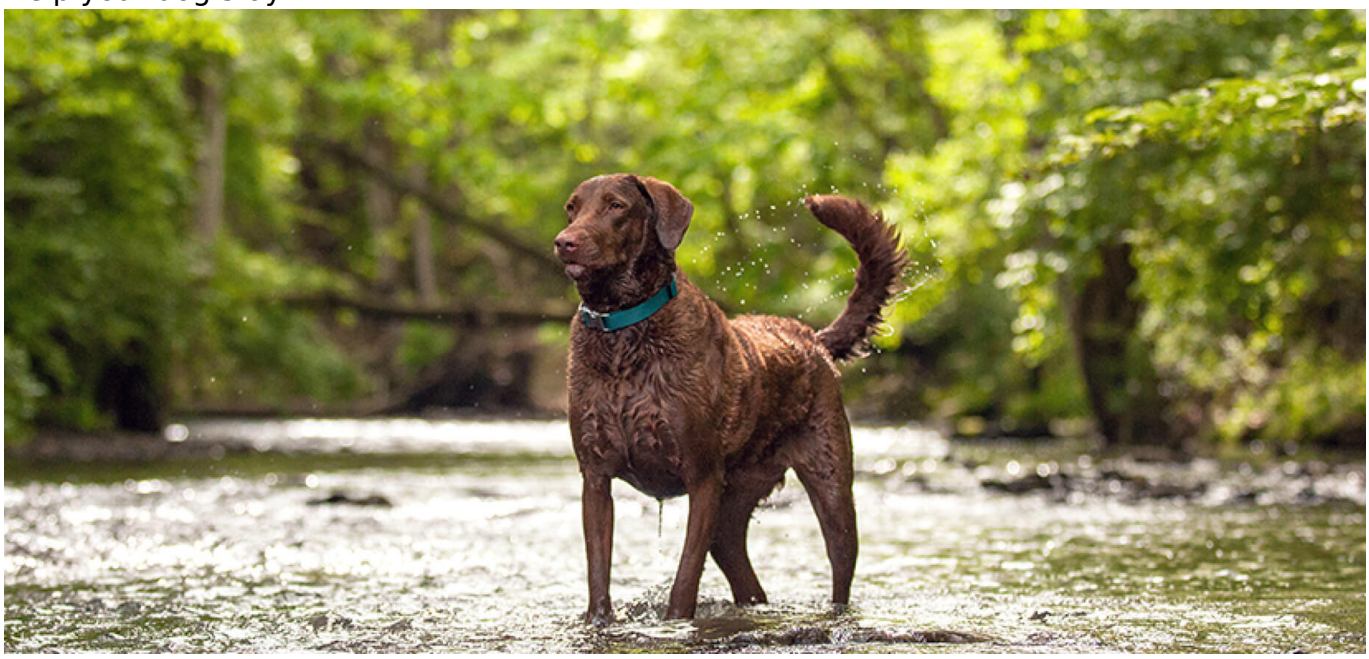
Help your dog stay trim



Nutrition & health resources:

Help your dog stay trim

When it comes to staying fit and trim, some dogs need more help than others. Senior dogs, especially, need the help of the people in their lives to keep them on the path to slimness. This is because older dogs are generally less active and, like middle-age people, their metabolism changes and they tend to gain weight. Here are a few exercise and nutrition tips to help keep your dog trim.

Exercise tips

No matter how old they are, when a dog is active and stimulated it's good for their overall well-being: physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Take it easy. This is the key to exercising your older dog. Walking is ideal for your senior dog because it keeps their muscles toned and their joints moving. If they haven't been active recently, start gradually with short walks. The length of a walk is dependent on the dog's condition, age, and breed - and on the weather outside. For many senior dogs, a typical walk could consist of a 5-minute warm-up followed by a 15-minute walk (start moderately and slowly build up to a brisker pace). After the walk, let your dog cool down for

about 5 minutes. And remember, for a senior dog that's out of shape, two brief walks a day is better than one long walk.

Get in the game. Playing with your dog is a great way to get them moving. But keep things light: when playing fetch, don't throw the ball as far as you did when they were younger. Keep the tosses short so they don't overexert themselves. Play sessions can take place indoors as well as outdoors. So if the weather is too harsh for your senior dog, bring your game play indoors where you can both be comfortable.

Things to do after exercising. After a healthy dose of exercise, wait 30 minutes before feeding your dog. If they're tired, make sure your dog has a comfortable place to rest, such as an orthopaedic bed. Chances are the exercise will make them thirsty, so offer small amounts of water frequently, instead of allowing them to gulp a large bowl of water all at once.

Nutrition tips

As in humans, a dog's metabolism and activity level slows down as they age. And, like us, their diet should be modified to meet those changes. But when should you switch your dog's food - and what should you look for in a senior diet?

Make sure your dog is getting the right kind of protein. Many people think that senior dogs need a low-protein diet, but protein requirements don't necessarily decrease with age if the dog is healthy. Senior dogs need high-quality, highly digestible protein to help maintain strong, healthy muscles.

Watch those calories. You know what happens to people when they reach a certain age: all those calories they gobble up start to make themselves known in the most unflattering ways. Here's an instance where dogs and their caregivers are very similar. Older dogs are less active, so they don't burn off calories like they did when they were energetic pups. That's why senior dogs need fewer calories than younger dogs.

Fibre keeps the world moving. There are several reasons why fibre is important. First of all, fibre creates a feeling of fullness - which means your dog will feel satisfied without having to eat very large amounts of food and the calories it contains. Fibre also optimises stool quality and helps keep them regular.

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