

Information from your veterinarian



Vitamins and supplements for your dog

When you're trying for a balanced diet, you may count fat calories, consult the food pyramid, look for creative recipes to make broccoli more appealing, limit fatty snacks, and investigate various vitamins and herbal supplements. The good news: It's usually easier to keep your dog's diet on track.

If you're feeding your dog a premium food, he's probably getting all the nutrition he needs. However, some dogs can benefit from vitamins or supplements. Here's what to consider:

Nutritional supplements

Your dog may look and feel good enough to climb tall mountains and leap over buildings in a single bound—or he may need a little boost. If you're concerned, consult your veterinarian. He or she can tell you if your pet needs a little something extra.

In some cases, you can help control medical problems with supplements. For example, many large dog breeds are prone to hip dysplasia and other forms of arthritis. Glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate may slow the degenerative process. Or if your dog's allergies give him itchy paws, your veterinarian might recommend supplements containing omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids to help control his condition.

Some progressive pet food manufacturers recognize the potential benefits of nutritional supplements and already add

them to their foods. So before you give your pet anything, make sure he's not already crunching it down with his kibble. One dose is plenty, and you may already have paid for it!

Vitamins and minerals

Most commercially prepared pet foods contain only small amounts of vitamins and minerals, and some dogs may need more. If your pet needs a vitamin, choose a multivitamin or a balanced vitamin-mineral supplement. Your veterinarian can recommend one for you.

Most of all, remember not to overdo it. Think of the supplement as a "one-a-day," much like the human brand—and remember that just because one is good, it doesn't mean more is better! Too many vitamins and minerals can cause various nutrition-related diseases.

Vitamins and supplements for your cat

You hear reports on the news about cancer-fighting vitamins and essential minerals, and you wonder: Does my tabby need to take supplements? The answer is a resounding maybe.

Is my kitty getting his RDA?

An adult cat that eats premium foods generally doesn't need supplements unless he's an unmotivated eater. Your veterinarian can tell you if your kitty needs extra vitamins and minerals and recommend balanced supplement options.

Cats aren't dogs

Before you offer your cat any supplement—or treat, for that matter—check the product label. Keep in mind that cats can't metabolize some nutraceuticals the same way that dogs can. Fatty acids are a good example of this. Cats don't utilize the omega-3 fatty acid in flax seed oil at all, for instance.