



PET CORNER

It is common practice for clients to bring their new puppies and kittens to see a veterinarian for examinations, vaccines, and even to have them spayed and neutered. How frequently should a healthy adult dog or cat should be seen by a veterinarian?

This is a great question and one that has no clear answer. The American Medical Association, the main governing medical body for humans, recommends routine examinations for all adult men and women. How does this relate to our healthy pet companions?

Let's consider a large breed dog who weighs over 80 pounds. By the time this dog is 2 years old he probably is the health equivalent to his 30 year old owner. Along this same line of thinking, a medium sized dog (45 pounds) would reach 30 years of age by age 4 and be over the hill by age 6. Cats also age in a similar fashion.

With this in mind, it is clear that our healthy dogs and cats should be seen more frequently than ourselves because they age faster, or more accurately, they don't live as long. It is very common for me to examine pets that haven't been to the vet in 10 years because they "seemed fine."

This line of thinking is dangerous for two reasons. First, dogs and cats are descendants of wild animals that have been conditioned not to show pain, suffering, or illness. Whereas humans would complain of intestinal pain at the early onset of disease, a dog or cat will likely hide that pain for months. Secondly, the best form of medicine is preventative medicine and when you identify diseases in their earliest form the success rate of treatment increases exponentially.

Adult dogs and cats in their early years should see a veterinarian at least once a year for routine blood work, vaccinations, dental check-ups, and parasite control. Older animals should be examined twice a year for heart murmurs, prostate exams, thyroid and diabetes testing, blood pressure measurements, and early kidney disease.

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