



## Weight Loss Tips

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Obesity is a common occurrence among our companion pets, and is one of the most discussed physical exam findings at their annual or biannual check-ups. Most pet owners do not realize when their pet is overweight or obese, and unfortunately the extra weight can have many detrimental effects on their health. **FUN FACT:** one additional pound of body weight on a small dog or cat is equivalent to 10-15 extra pounds on a human! The doctors and technicians at Hampton Veterinary Hospital are here to help get your pets back on track to their ideal weight, with tailored tips on healthy eating and exercise.

### 1. Meal Feeding, Measuring, and Keeping Calories in Check

Measuring food is a very important part of a healthy diet that meets the nutritional and caloric needs of your pet. Your veterinarian can give you an appropriate calorie requirement per day, and help determine the amount of food that will allow for ideal weight and body condition. It is important to stick with this amount, and ensure that everyone in the family is on the same page.

➤ **FUN FACTS:**

- A heaping scoop of food can have as much as 40% more calories than a level cup.
- Older, neutered/spayed, or inactive pets need 10-20% less calories every day.

- **HELPFUL TIP:** Make a mark on a measuring cup to ensure exact measurements each meal; also, ensure that your pet is not getting extra meals by creating a chart for everyone to check off and refer to for AM and PM meals.

### 2. Keep Tabs on Treats!

Treats do count! Although rewarding your pet is great, use treats in moderation. Every treat counts towards their calories, so ensure that you are including those treats in calculating their daily caloric needs.

- **FUN FACT:** Treats should make up **NO MORE** than 10% of your pet's diet and caloric needs.

➤ **HELPFUL TIPS:**

- Measure your pet's breakfast and dinner ahead of time, and use a small portion of the kibble as their treats through the day, so you ensure you are only feeding them the calories they need.
- You can also swap some high calorie treats with options that are less calorically dense, such as green beans or blueberries for dogs, and dried shrimp or catnip for cats.

### 3. Exercise and Play

Hampton Veterinary Hospital  
871 Lafayette Road (Route 1)  
Hampton, NH 03842



Phone Number: (603) 926-7978

Fax Number: (603) 926 – 3071

Email Address: [contact@hamptonveterinaryhospital.com](mailto:contact@hamptonveterinaryhospital.com)

Exercise plays a key role in both human and pet health. For dogs, a brisk 12-15 minutes per mile is an excellent pace for a walk, and remember that stopping to sniff every few feet is not good exercise ☺ Get your kitties moving with feather toys, battery-powered mice, laser pointers, scratching posts, chasing kibble down a hallway, etc - a good goal is at least 10-15 minutes per day.

#### 4. **Controlling Cravings**

Many dogs develop begging as an attention-seeking behavior; it is important to ignore this behavior, or redirect them with another activity they enjoy, such as taking a walk, playing with a ball or toy, or enjoying some TLC. The extra activity will strengthen your bond and help them forget about the food.

➤ **FUN FACT:** Some treats can equate to a human eating 5 or 6 donuts!

#### 5. **Make Them Work for Food ☺**

With respect to treats, give commands and reward for appropriate reactions. For meals, you can place their food bowls far from their favorite spot to lounge so they need to get up and move to eat. Also, you can use toys and food puzzle balls to force them to interact and move to get their meal. This will also help keep them busy and keep them from begging during family meals.

#### 6. **Be Patient**

Don't make drastic changes too quickly -gradually transition to their diet food (if they are on one) over the course of 1-2 weeks by combining it with their current food. Remember, weight loss won't happen overnight, but it does help to get into a routine.

➤ **HELPFUL TIP:** Feed your pet at the same times every day so they will learn to expect food at that time and be less likely to beg for food throughout the day.

#### 7. **Making Diet Food More Enticing**

Sometimes diet foods are not as palatable and tasty as regular food, as we all know! Here are some helpful tips to entice your pet to eat their diet food.

➤ **HELPFUL TIPS**

- Add green beans (cooked, frozen, or raw) to their food, this can help entice them to eat, and the fiber content in the green beans will help keep them feeling full and satisfied.
- Try warming up food or adding a splash of plain low sodium chicken broth, salmon juice, or fish oil.