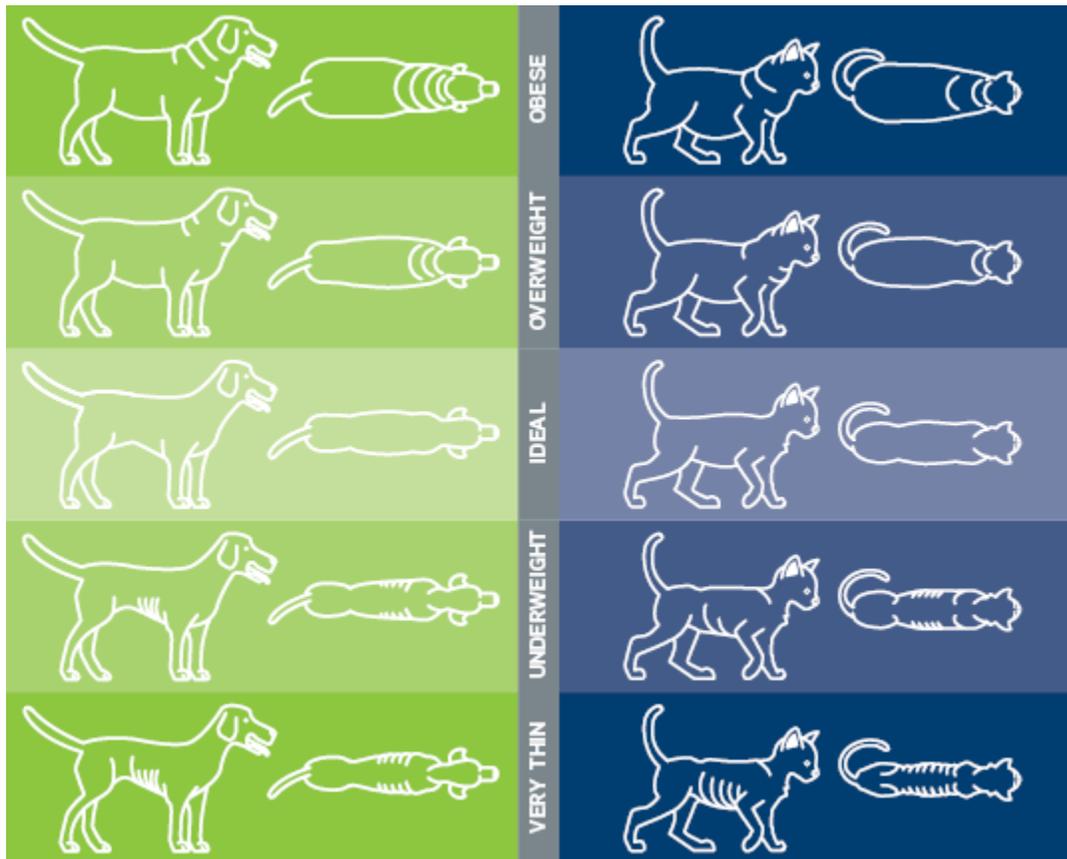


## YOUR PET'S HEALTHY WEIGHT

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight reduces your pet's risk of disease and injury, and contributes to a better quality of life and a longer life expectancy for your pet.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF MY PET'S WEIGHT IS HEALTHY?

First and foremost, have an honest conversation with your veterinarian about your pet's weight. Your veterinarian can assess your pet's weight and overall health and make recommendations regarding your pet's weight, diet and exercise. Your veterinarian can also teach you to assess your pet's body condition by observing your pet's body shape and feeling certain parts of your pet's body. A healthy weight isn't simply a number on a scale; it's about healthy body composition.



### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF KEEPING MY PET AT A HEALTHY WEIGHT?

Keeping your pet at a healthy weight lowers his/her risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, respiratory disease, kidney disease, and some forms of cancer. It can also reduce the risks of injury to bones, joints and muscles that are associated with excess weight. If your pet has arthritis, keeping him/her at a healthy weight makes it easier to manage the discomfort associated with joint pain. Because excess weight can reduce your pet's life expectancy by more than two years, keeping your pet trim gives them the best chance of a longer, healthier, and pain-free life.

## **HOW DO I REDUCE MY PET'S WEIGHT?**

It's probably no surprise, but there's no one-size-fits-all approach or magic remedy to help your pet shed excess pounds. What works for one pet doesn't necessarily work for another pet. Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight requires a commitment to a healthier lifestyle that achieves a balance between the calories consumed and the calories used by the body for normal functions and activity. Even a modest reduction in weight can significantly reduce your pet's risk of life-threatening diseases.

In simplest terms, weight loss involves reducing your pet's caloric intake and increasing their activity level to burn more calories. Be patient. It often takes longer to lose weight than it did for your pet to gain it.

### **PUT YOUR PET FIRST**

Working with your veterinarian, make an honest assessment of your pet's health and weight. Does your pet have any medical problems that have been caused – or made worse – by excess weight? Is your pet's weight putting him/her at a higher risk of disease or problems? Focus on what matters – your pet's good health and long life.

### **MAKE A FAMILY COMMITMENT**

A commitment to reach and maintain a healthy weight for your pet requires a commitment from the entire family – a weight loss plan isn't going to succeed if one family member sneaks your pet extra food. Remind your family that there are many ways other than food to demonstrate and express their love for your family pet.

### **FEED A NUTRITIOUS AND HEALTHY DIET**

Eliminate table scraps and fattening, high-calorie treats; keep food treats to a minimum and focus on healthier food and treats; and don't give into the sad, begging eyes. It may help to slow your pet's food consumption by using a special bowl or food puzzle that makes it harder for them to gulp their food, or by using toys that dispense food in small amounts (be careful to keep the total daily amount of food within an acceptable amount). Smaller, more frequent feedings may also be of benefit to your pet's health. Feed your pet a balanced, nutritious pet food. Consult with your veterinarian about the best food choice for your pet's condition.

The recommended feeding amount printed on the pet food label might not be appropriate for your pet. Consult your veterinarian about the amount and frequency of feeding that's right for your pet.

### **SET GOALS**

Work with your veterinarian as a team to develop realistic goals for reducing your pet's weight in a healthy manner. Rapid weight loss can result in serious health problems, so ask your veterinarian for recommendations for healthier eating and exercise that will produce a reasonable and safe rate of weight loss based on your pet's overall health.

### **MAKE IT FUN**

Being more active and living a healthier lifestyle benefits the entire family. Find activities you enjoy that can include your pet, and the journey will be more enjoyable for all of you.

## **MONITOR AND RECORD PROGRESS**

Once you've set reasonable goals to achieve and maintain your pet's healthy weight, be sure to monitor and record your pet's progress. As with all weight loss programs, there will be successes and there will be missteps. By monitoring and recording your pet's progress, you can determine what's working and what's not effective, and make adjustments as needed to the program.

Maintaining your pet's healthy weight gives your pet the best chance of living a healthier, longer life as a beloved member of your family. Talk to your veterinarian today about your pet's weight.