



# 10 Tips for Your Senior Pets

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## 1. Health Check-ups

Make sure your senior pet has regular visits with your veterinarian. In fact, many veterinarians recommend that senior dogs should be examined twice a year, even more so if the dog has serious health issues. A thorough physical examination by your veterinarian may reveal health issues that can impact your pet's life and comfort level, such as dental disease, arthritis, heart disease, kidney disease and more.

## 2. Diet supplements and special treatments

Products such as glucosamine/chondroitin can be used for arthritis. There are also massage therapists and water treatment programs to help older animals find relief from their aches and pains.

## 2. Behavior Changes in Your Dog

Watch your senior's behavior carefully. This is important for all pets but doubly so for senior dogs. Changes in your friend's behavior may be a symptom of disease. Watch specifically for changes in their appetite and water consumption. Any changes in your senior pet's routines or behaviors should prompt a consultation with your veterinarian.

## 3. Getting Around

Be aware that your senior animal may have pain caused by arthritis or other health issues that make it difficult for him to get around as well as he did when he was younger.

- Ramps or stairs to access furniture or beds.
- Ramps on stairs may make it easier to get up and down the stairs
- Carpeting on slippery floors to help your dog gain his footing.

## 4. Age-Appropriate Diet

Dietary requirements may change as your pet ages. It's important that you provide your senior a pet food that is age appropriate. Some older pets tend to gain weight and may need a diet for less active animals. Others may have difficulty holding their weight and may need a diet with a higher calorie content or better *palatability*.

## 5. Show Your Softer Side

Provide soft blankets and towels for your senior animal's bed. This will help him to rest easier and sleep better. There are even special orthopedic beds made for seniors. In addition to having a denser form to help cushion your furry friends aging joints, some orthopedic beds can be outfitted with a heat and/or vibration source, which increases circulation and reduces stiffness — perfect for animals with arthritis.

## 7. Keep Active

Give your senior dog adequate exercise, but adjust it to her changing abilities. As with our own bodies, exercise benefits old dogs in many ways, keeping muscles toned and minds clearer. Making the time for even a gentle walk around the block every day will keep the muscles from atrophy, and the sights and especially the smells will keep an old dog's mind stimulated and engaged in the world around him.

## 8. Save the Smile

Attend to your pet's dental health. Brush her teeth daily and have them cleaned professionally whenever your vet advises it. Tartar build-up on neglected teeth leads to inflamed and infected gums, or gingivitis. The bacteria from gingivitis affects all body systems, especially the major organs of kidney, liver, and heart.

## 9. All Ears

You may notice your old friend doesn't respond to you like he used to. Hearing loss is very common as animals age and he may not realize you're calling him. Be sure to keep your dog on a leash or within your sight if you take him to the park, on an easy hike, or even on your own property.

## 10. The Best is Yet to Come

Make your senior as much a part of your life as possible, and do all you can to keep him interested, active, happy and comfortable.

