



The Dangers of Pet Obesity










It is easy to be complacent about pet obesity. We love our pets no matter how they look; we might even think their “pudginess” is cute. Some of us show our affection towards our animals by giving them treats, lots of treats! Even though the subject of pet obesity seems secondary to other health topics, this is a major oversight. Obese pets are at a greater risk of several serious, sometimes deadly consequences.

Possible Consequences of Pet Obesity:

- **Arthritis** – The heavier your pet is, the more strain is placed upon your pet’s joints. This increased pressure causes the cartilage in joints to slowly deteriorate, creating a bone-on-bone grinding, which is painful.
- **CCL Rupture** – The increased pressure on your pet’s joints can also cause a rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) located in your pet’s knee, which is similar to the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) in humans. Surgery is the best treatment for these ruptures and is often very costly.
- **Heart and Breathing Issues** – Overweight pets are at a higher risk of heart disease and high blood pressure. They are also more likely to have laryngeal paralysis and a collapsing trachea, which can cause significant trouble breathing.
- **Higher Anesthetic Risk** – If your obese pet needs to be sedated or anesthetized, he/she is at a higher risk than healthy weight pets. The increased weight on your pet’s chest makes it harder for them to breathe. Their heart also must work harder during anesthesia. Overweight pets take longer to recover from anesthesia too.
- **Skin Problems** – Excessive “fat rolls” lead to moist skin pockets and bacteria and yeast infections. This is not only a stinky situation, but it also causes your pet to itch. Overweight pets cannot groom themselves effectively, causing their haircoat to look greasy or dull. They are also prone to fatty masses called lipomas, which can create a scare for owners since these masses can look and feel identical to cancerous tumors.
- **Increased Risk of Cancer** – Obese pets are more likely to develop cancers such as mammary and bladder neoplasia.
- **Poorer Quality-of-Life** – Overweight pets are tired more often and less likely to run and play with their toys.
- **Shortened Life Span** – Obese pets live a shorter life. Obesity can take away two or more years from your pet’s lifespan, which is super sad!



So, how do you know if your pet is overweight? At Ely Veterinary Care (EVC), we will weigh your pet, assign them a Body Condition Score (BCS), give you an ideal weight for your pet, and provide your pet with a daily calorie count. The BCS system ranges from 1-9 with a score of 1 being emaciated and a score of 9 being morbidly obese. The ideal BCS for your pet is a 5. Please reference the illustrations below for more information:

TOO THIN	1	Ribs, lumbar vertebrae, pelvic bones and all bony prominences evident from a distance. No discernible body fat. Obvious loss of muscle mass.		1
	2	Ribs, lumbar vertebrae and pelvic bones easily visible. No palpable fat. Some evidence of other bony prominence. Minimal loss of muscle mass.		2
	3	Ribs easily palpated and may be visible with no palpable fat. Tops of lumbar vertebrae visible. Pelvic bones becoming prominent. Obvious waist and abdominal tuck.		3
IDEAL	4	Ribs easily palpable, with minimal fat covering. Waist easily noted, viewed from above. Abdominal tuck evident.		4
	5	Ribs palpable without excess fat covering. Waist observed behind ribs when viewed from above. Abdomen tucked up when viewed from side.		5
TOO HEAVY	6	Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering. Waist is discernible viewed from above but is not prominent. Abdominal tuck apparent.		6
	7	Ribs palpable with difficulty; heavy fat cover. Noticeable fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be present.		7
	8	Ribs not palpable under very heavy fat cover, or palpable only with significant pressure. Heavy fat deposits over lumbar area and base of tail. Waist absent. No abdominal tuck. Obvious abdominal distention may be present.		8
	9	Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine and base of tail. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Fat deposits on neck and limbs. Obvious abdominal distention.		9


The **BODY CONDITION SYSTEM** was developed at the Nestlé Purina Pet Care Center and has been validated as documented in the following publications:

Mawby D, Bartges JW, Moyers T, et. al. *Comparison of body fat estimates by dual-energy x-ray absorptiometry and deuterium oxide dilution in client owned dogs.* Compendium 2001; 23 (9A): 70

Lafamme DP. *Development and Validation of a Body Condition Score System for Dogs.* Canine Practice July/August 1997; 22:10-15

Koaly, et. al. *Effects of Diet Restriction on Life Span and Age-Related Changes in Dogs.* JAVMA 2002; 220:1315-1320

Call 1-800-222-VETS (8387), weekdays, 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. CT





TOO THIN	1	Ribs visible on shorthaired cats; no palpable fat; severe abdominal tuck; lumbar vertebrae and wings of ilia easily palpated.	
	2	Ribs easily visible on shorthaired cats; lumbar vertebrae obvious with minimal muscle mass; pronounced abdominal tuck; no palpable fat.	
	3	Ribs easily palpable with minimal fat covering; lumbar vertebrae obvious; obvious waist behind ribs; minimal abdominal fat.	
	4	Ribs palpable with minimal fat covering; noticeable waist behind ribs; slight abdominal tuck; abdominal fat pad absent.	
IDEAL	5	Well-proportioned; observe waist behind ribs; ribs palpable with slight fat covering; abdominal fat pad minimal.	
TOO HEAVY	6	Ribs palpable with slight excess fat covering; waist and abdominal fat pad distinguishable but not obvious; abdominal tuck absent.	
	7	Ribs not easily palpated with moderate fat covering; waist poorly discernible; obvious rounding of abdomen; moderate abdominal fat pad.	
	8	Ribs not palpable with excess fat covering; waist absent; obvious rounding of abdomen with prominent abdominal fat pad; fat deposits present over lumbar area.	
	9	Ribs not palpable under heavy fat cover; heavy fat deposits over lumbar area, face and limbs; distention of abdomen with no waist; extensive abdominal fat deposits.	
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If your pet as been assigned a BCS of 6-9, don't fret! There are several things you can do to help your pet lose weight. Please see these weight loss tips below:

Weight Loss Tips:

- Know your pet's ideal body weight, which is _____ lbs. You will want to start feeding your pet based on their ideal body weight. You can either look at the back of your pet's current food bag and refer to the feeding chart; on this chart, you will find how may cups per day should be fed to your pet based on their ideal body



weight, **NOT** on their current body weight. For example, if your pet's ideal body weight is 50 lbs., but he/she is currently 70 lbs., you will find the 50 lb. range on the feeding chart and feed them the cups per day recommended for a 50 lb. dog. Alternatively, you can take your pet's recommended calories per day, which is _____ kcals and find how many kcals per cup make up your pet's current diet. This number is usually seen as "kcals/cup" in small writing on the side or back of your pet's food bag. When you find how many kcals/cup are present in your pet's food, take your pet's recommended calories per day and divide it by the kcals/cup. The number you get will be how many cups per day your pet needs. For example, if we tell you that your pet needs to eat 300 calories or kcals per day, and you find that your pet's food contains 290 kcals/cup, then you should be feeding 1 cup per day to your pet ($300/290 = 1.03$).

- You can split your pet's allotted cups per day into two feedings. This helps to keep your pet full throughout the day. For example, if you are supposed to feed your pet 1.5 cups per day, you can split this amount into $\frac{3}{4}$ cup twice daily.
- Use an actual measuring cup to feed your pet. **NOT** a "scoop" or "drinking cup."
- Discontinue giving your pet canned food, treats, and human food.
- You can use your pet's daily allotted food amount as treats by taking out a few pieces of kibble from this amount and giving them to your pet during random times of the day as special "treats."
- You may be recommended a special weight loss diet for your pet. These diets are usually high in fiber to make your pet feel full without introducing a lot of calories into their meals. We recommend that your pet eats _____ at _____ cups per day. For information on how to transition your pet's food, please see the handout on our website titled "How to Transition Your Pet Onto a New Diet."
- Bring your pet to the clinic periodically for free "Happy Visits" where he/she can be weighed and petted so that we can track their weight loss journey.
- Exercise at home is also important! You can take your dog for daily walks or play with your cat using cat toys.

Please reach out to us for a nutrition or weight loss consult for your pet today!

* For additional pet weight loss resources, please follow this Hill's link:

<https://www.hillspet.com/products/weight-management-pet-food>. The link to our online pharmacy for ordering your pet's recommended weight loss food can be found at:

<https://elyvetcarepllc.securevetsource.com/index.pml>