

## PREPARING FOR VET VISITS WITH YOUR DOG

You may have a dog that thinks going to the vet is a fun way to spend a couple hours. They like the car ride, the staff, the treats, the smells, the other dogs they see there, and very little scares or upsets them. Or you may have a dog that is absolutely terrified of the vet and requires a sedative to even walk through the door. Most seasoned dog owners have probably experienced both scenarios, or something in between.

Preparing in advance for vet visits is an important part of dog ownership. Here are a few tips that may help make your vet visits go more smoothly:

1. **Practice “vetting” your dog at home.** Touch his ears, look in his mouth, rub along his sides and belly with a little pressure, pick up his legs and bend and straighten them and pick up his paws and look at his nails and pads. The more positive physical interactions and contact you have with your dog, the more comfortable he is likely to be with the vet touching him.
2. **Bring along all medical records** including previous immunizations, deworming treatments, heartworm/tick prevention, and medical concerns.
3. **Get your dog accustomed to car travel prior to a trip to the vet.** For safety, properly restrain your dog in your car by placing him in a crate or use an approved canine harness restraint. Take practice car rides, making short trips to a pleasant location, such as a nearby park, and provide a treat when you reach the destination. If your dog enjoys traveling in a vehicle, going to your veterinarian is much easier.
4. **Request a “meet and greet” at the veterinary clinic prior to your dog’s first visit.** You will have a chance to meet the staff and see the facility, and your dog can have a fun, stress-free introduction to a new place. Ask if you can drop in when the clinic is least busy so that your dog is not overwhelmed by a multitude of strange dogs and cats, and so the receptionist has time to chat with you. Keep your dog on a short leash and keep him close to you. Make it a positive experience with treats, a tour of the hospital if possible and making friends with a couple of staff people.
5. **Take your dog for a walk to expend excess energy prior to the appointment** when your dog will be seeing the actual veterinarian.
6. After checking in with the receptionist, **sit in a quiet area of the waiting room** (if there is one) and **speak to your dog in a calm reassuring voice.** Keep close to him since your presence is comforting. Try to position him so that other animals are not in his direct line of vision. If he is too nervous/anxious in the waiting room, you can ask if you can wait outside or in your car and get a text or phone call when it is your dog’s turn to be seen.
7. If your dog is still very anxious/fearful at the vet after trying all the above tips, consider researching a vet that is certified as “Fear Free” and/or discuss with the vet if a sedative prior to the visit may be warranted. Seeking out the assistance of a canine behaviorist may be helpful as well.