

Chihuahua Puppy General Care

Supplies

Before you bring your puppy home, you should have the following: An exercise pen or crate to confine your puppy, newspapers, potty pads or a litterbox, a collar and leash, food and water bowls, premium food, plenty of safe items to chew on and toys to play with, bedding, Nutri-cal, a good book on chihuahua care and training, the contact information of a good vet and a puppy proofed home (no exposed electrical cords, cleaning supplies, plants, etc.)

Housetraining

Small puppies eliminate frequently and with little or no warning. They are like babies and can't hold it! Constant supervision is key. Never let a puppy have free run of your home if you are not supervising every move, every minute.

The more accidents your puppy makes when you are not watching, the more ingrained this bad habit becomes, and the harder it will be to housetrain your puppy. Prevention, supervision, and rewarding the desired behavior are the way to train your puppy.

A puppy will need to eliminate after each meal, after play periods, and after waking from a nap. Small puppies may need to urinate as often as every 15 minutes! Sniffing the ground and circling can be signs that it is time to take your puppy outside, or to his litterbox, newspaper or potty pad- whichever method you have decided on. If you catch the puppy starting to squat, bring him to the correct place, and reward and praise after he has eliminated in the correct spot! Never punish a puppy for an accident you find after the fact- he will not remember doing it, and will not understand why you are angry. Besides, the accident will be your fault for not having supervised him well enough.

When you cannot watch your puppy, you can keep him in an exercise pen with a bed and food at one end and a potty pad, newspaper or litterbox at the other end. The puppy will naturally not want to soil his sleeping/ eating area and will walk away towards the appropriate spot to eliminate. It may be helpful to place a small piece of soiled newspaper or potty pad, or a handful of soiled litter in the spot where you want your puppy to eliminate. Puppies naturally want to eliminate where they can smell urine.

Often, puppies will cry and whine when first introduced to their pen (or crate). Going back to comfort the whining puppy, or lifting him out every time he cries is rewarding bad behavior- this tells the puppy that "when I cry, mommy or daddy rescues me". If you would like a puppy that is quiet and well behaved in his crate or pen, this behavior must be ignored. From day one, praise and attention should be given when the puppy is calm and quiet- reward the good behavior and ignore the bad!

Feeding

Chihuahuas have higher metabolisms than most breeds and only premium dog foods should be fed. The higher expense should not be an issue, as chihuahuas eat very little. When a quality dog food is fed, no additional supplementation is recommended.

Young puppies should have dry food available at all times to prevent hypoglycemia. Older adult dogs may be fed twice daily. Be careful not to overfeed your chihuahua, as obesity can create health issues and shorten your pet's lifespan.

Also be careful not to create a fussy eater. For adults, offering the same food twice a day for 15-30 minutes on a consistent schedule can prevent fussy eating habits. Leaving food out at all times and/or constantly feeding treats and table scraps can lead to a dog that refuses to eat dog food, which can create serious dietary imbalances and health issues.

Homecooked diets are not recommended unless they are formulated by a nutritionist and followed to the letter. Be aware that not all recipes on the internet and/or in dog cook books are balanced or healthy for your dog.

Always provide water in a container that is heavy and can't be tipped, but not large enough for puppy to fall into.

Milk or table scraps can cause diarrhea in a puppy. Small bits of lean meat may be used for training purposes, but should make up no more than 10% of any dog's diet.

Certain foods are toxic to your chihuahua and should not be fed. These include: chocolate, onions, xylitol (found in candy and other sugar-free sweets), raisins, grapes, raw bread dough, large quantities of garlic, raw potato, mushrooms, coffee, tea, alcoholic beverages, apple seeds, pear/peach/plum/apricot cores, avocado, tomato leaves and stems, large amounts of broccoli, cooked chicken bones, cooked meat fat trimmings/drippings (can lead to pancreatitis) and large amounts of beef liver (can lead to excesses of vitamin A and certain minerals. Safe in small amounts)

Hypoglycemia:

Before the day your pup comes home, go to your vet or pet supply store and buy a tube of Nutri-cal, (or "Nutri-stat" or "Vitalcal"). This may save your pup's life.

Hypoglycemia means low blood sugar. It can occur if a puppy has gone too long between meals, has gotten chilled or is stressed. It is common in small breed puppies and is life threatening- your puppy could die if not treated for it quickly.

A chihuahua puppy should always have access to food and must be monitored to make sure that he/she is eating.

The puppy should always be kept warm, just like you would with a human baby, and should be watched closely after periods of stress, such as the first day in a new home, shipping, or first trip to the vet, and after periods of prolonged activity.

Here are some signs of hypoglycemia: weakness, listlessness, uncoordinated (acting as if drunk), blue or gray tinge to the ears, gums or skin, cold to the touch, confusion, disorientation, and/or unusual drowsiness. Left untreated, the dog may go into seizures and/or unconsciousness and may die.

If you see any of the above signs, **FIRST**, administer a supplement such as Nutri-cal (preferable), corn syrup or sugar- (dab it on the pup's gums and/or squirt under tongue). **THEN** feed a protein-rich food, such as meat baby food or canned food. If symptoms do not improve immediately, **CALL YOUR VET**. If your pup perks right up and seems just fine after receiving the Nutri-cal or other sugar source plus protein food, closely monitor him/ her.

Do not put sugar in your chihuahua's drinking water. This will not prevent low blood sugar, and could even cause the blood sugar to spike and drop, creating the very condition you were trying to prevent.

Grooming Your Chihuahua:

Puppies should be bathed as needed with a mild, puppy-safe shampoo and kept warm and out of drafts until completely dry. Great care should be taken that no water gets into a puppy's nose or mouth during bathing. Inhalation of water can lead to pneumonia.

Long coat chihuahuas should be brushed regularly.

Brush your chihuahua's teeth regularly and provide appropriate chew toys. Have your veterinarian check his teeth yearly. Poorly maintained teeth may lead to other health problems.

Clean ears with a cotton ball and mild ear cleaner made for dogs. If the inside of the ear is red, irritated, has a foul odor or a dark brown residue, have your dog checked by a veterinarian.

Trim your chihuahua's nails regularly. If you do not feel comfortable with this procedure, have your veterinarian or a groomer do it. Dewclaws left untrimmed can cause painful injuries. Untrimmed nails can also create splayed feet and make walking uncomfortable for your pet.

Health Care

Ask your chihuahua's breeder and/or other toy breed owners to recommend a good vet.

Your puppy's breeder should provide you with a medical history for you to bring to your vet. Your veterinarian can advise you on how to continue to keep your puppy free of fleas, heartworms and other parasites.

Dr. Jean Dodd's vaccine protocol is recommended:

Age of Pups	Vaccine Type
9 - 10 weeks	Distemper + Parvovirus, MLV (e.g. Intervet Progard Puppy DPV)
14 weeks	Same as above
16 -18 weeks (optional)	Same as above
20 weeks or older, if allowable by law	Rabies
1 year	Distemper + Parvovirus, MLV
1 year	Rabies, killed 3-year product (give 3-4 weeks <i>apart</i> from distemper/parvovirus booster)

Perform vaccine antibody titers for distemper and parvovirus annually thereafter. Vaccinate for rabies virus according to the law, except where circumstances indicate that a written waiver needs to be obtained from the primary care veterinarian. In that case, a rabies antibody titer can also be performed to accompany the waiver request.

Leptospirosis and Coronavirus vaccines are not recommended. The usefulness of vaccinating for adenovirus, hepatitis, Lyme disease, giardia, bordatella, and parainfluenza is debatable.

It is a good idea to have a rectal or special pet ear thermometer just for your dog (normal temperature is 99° to 101°).

General Safety Tips:

Do not allow puppies to jump off of furniture or steps as they can break a leg or be seriously injured. Never leave a chihuahua puppy on a bed, chair or couch unattended! Letting your chihuahua puppy sleep in the bed with you can also be dangerous- if you roll over on him or he falls off the bed this can cause serious injury or even death.

Young puppies chew and ingest everything! Many plants are harmful and should be kept out of a puppy's reach. Electric cords should also be out of a puppy's reach. Puppy proof your house before bringing your puppy home.

A tiny dog is easy to lose. Never leave a puppy outside unattended. It is easy for someone to steal a tiny dog and large birds of prey have been known to carry off tiny puppies and small adult chihuahuas. Check fences regularly for repairs or open gates. An exercise pen or a playpen is worthwhile investment to safely confine your puppy.

Have your puppy microchipped or have him wear a collar with an ID tag at all times.

Take care that you do not let your puppy play on a lawn that has been treated with toxic insect repellents, fertilizers, cocoa mulch, salt in winter, etc. Insect or rodent bait, carpet fresheners, floor cleaners and other cleaning supplies can also be toxic to your chihuahua.

Remember a large dog can kill a chihuahua in one bite! Pick up your dog if another dog approaches and always have your dog on lead.

Never let your chihuahua run loose in a hotel room. Insect and rodent poison may be hidden under beds or behind furniture where your chihuahua can reach and ingest it.

Never leave a dog in the hot sun or outside in extreme cold. Never leave a dog in a parked car when it is warm outside!

Be careful of swimming pools – a chihuahua that falls into a pool can easily tire and drown.

Always hold your chihuahua with both arms, one securely under the dog supporting it against your chest and the other on top of the dog. Squeeze with your elbow if the dog wiggles and kneel quickly to the floor. (A dog dropped from this height has less chance of injury than if dropped from a standing position.)

Never attempt to hold two chihuahuas at once or something else along with the dog.

Tiny dogs are easily stepped on- watch your step and keep your puppy in a safe place when you have visitors! They will not be used to having a small puppy underfoot and are more likely to step on the puppy.

Special Precautions for Children and Chihuahuas:

Children can easily drop or injure a tiny dog. Children should only be allowed to hold a chihuahua while they are sitting on the ground.

Toddlers must be constantly supervised around a chihuahua puppy! A toy thrown at a chihuahua's head may prove fatal. A toddler tripping and falling on a chihuahua puppy may also lead to serious injury or death of the puppy.

Young children that are left unsupervised with chihuahua puppies may tease or scare the puppy, leading to fear aggression and biting even in a puppy with a genetically stable temperament. This type of situation should be prevented by constant supervision of children interacting with your puppy.

Chihuahuas are defenseless with small children and again, *they must be constantly supervised around the dog and kept separated when direct supervision is not possible.*

Barking

If you are consistent with your puppy from day one, you can teach him to be a quiet companion. A squirt bottle is a safe deterrent for avid barkers but it must be used consistently and with a stern command. Be careful to avoid squirting water into the nose or mouth. Praise your puppy when he is quiet and calm. Praising good behavior is just as important as correcting bad behavior.

Behavior, Training and Socialization

Although chihuahuas are small dogs, that is no excuse to let them get away with poor behavior or treat them as helpless little beings. Chihuahuas should be raised to have self confidence. Never soothe your chihuahua and say "it's okay, good boy" if he is barking or growling at another person or dog, or acting fearful around something harmless like a plastic bag on the ground- this is actually rewarding negative behavior. Displays of aggression should be corrected with a firm "no", and you should act calm and confident and ignore displays of irrational fear. Your puppy should be praised anytime he is calm, relaxed, curious about new things and outgoing.

Socialization is very important! As soon as your puppy has been vaccinated, bring him to different places to meet lots of people, children and other small dogs as often as possible. Have strangers and children give your puppy treats to create positive associations. Puppy playgroups and basic obedience classes are strongly recommended! Chihuahuas are just as able to learn commands and tricks as big dogs are. Positive training techniques are recommended.

To avoid separation anxiety in your puppy, make sure to not make a big deal of coming and going. If you have to leave your puppy alone at home for a few hours, do not make a big display of hugging and kissing the puppy goodbye and reassuring him that he will be okay. Simply place him in his pen or crate and leave. If you hear the puppy whining when you close the door, do not go back in and soothe him- this is a reward and is teaching the puppy to whine and cry while you are gone. When you get home, the same rule applies- do not make a big deal out of coming back and do not let the puppy out of his pen or crate if he is whining- wait until he is quiet and calm and then let him out and praise him. He will learn eventually that you always come back, that it is not a big deal when you leave, and that quiet, calm behavior brings him rewards- but only if you are consistent with these rules.

Philosophy

You have just made a major commitment in your life and accepted a loving, living responsibility that is looking to you for care, comfort, food, protection and attention. Your rewards for fulfilling your obligations to your chihuahua are endless and he will be a loyal devoted companion to you for life. Please treat him as an important member of your family at all times. Remember a chihuahua can't talk or fend for itself so he is dependent on you!

Always feel free to contact your chihuahua's breeder with questions. A good breeder is always happy to help and will enjoy hearing about how your puppy is progressing!