

# AAHA/AVMA Canine Preventive Healthcare Guidelines



## Frequency of Visits

All dogs should have a veterinary examination at least annually. For many dogs, more frequent visits may be appropriate. Decisions regarding specific frequency of visits should be made based on individual needs of the dog.

## Health Evaluation

### Subjective

History, including evaluation of

- Lifestyle and life stage
- Behavior
- Diet

### Objective

Comprehensive physical examination, including

- Dental assessment
- Pain assessment
- Body and muscle condition scoring

### Assessment

On the basis of history and physical examination findings, assessments are made for:

- Medical conditions
- Infectious and zoonotic diseases
- Parasite prevention and control
- Dental care
- Genetic, breed, and age considerations
- Behavior
- Nutrition



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These guidelines were developed jointly by the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA) and the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) to provide information for practitioners regarding the care and treatment of their canine and feline patients. The information contained in these guidelines should not be construed as dictating an exclusive protocol, course of treatment, or procedure. These guidelines are not intended to be an AAHA or AVMA standard of care. AAHA and AVMA hope that you find these guidelines useful.

The mission of the Partnership is to ensure that pets receive the preventive healthcare they deserve through regular veterinary visits. In addition to supporting these guidelines, the Partnership has created Partners for Healthy Pets, which offers tools and resources to enhance the overall vitality of pets and veterinary practices through preventive healthcare. For more information, go to [www.partnersforhealthypets.org](http://www.partnersforhealthypets.org).

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# Plan

Client communication and education plan to include:

## Diagnostic plan:

- Every dog should have:
  - Annual heartworm testing in accordance with existing guidelines
  - At least annual internal parasite testing
- Customized plan based on assessment:
  - Other diagnostic tests (including dental radiographs)
  - Early disease screening tests
  - Genetic screening tests

## Therapeutic plan:

- Every dog should receive:
  - Year-round broad-spectrum parasite control with efficacy against heartworms, intestinal parasites, and fleas
- Customized plan based on assessment:
  - Tick control as indicated by risk assessment
  - Therapeutic recommendations
  - Dental recommendations
  - Behavioral recommendations
  - Dietary recommendations

## Prevention plan:

- Every dog should have or receive:
  - Immunization with core vaccines in accordance with existing guidelines
    - Rabies virus
    - Canine distemper virus
    - Canine parvovirus
    - Canine adenovirus-2
  - Appropriate identification including microchipping
  - Reproductive and genetic counseling and spaying or neutering unless specifically intended for breeding purposes
- Customized plan based on assessment:
  - Immunization with non-core vaccines in accordance with existing guidelines
  - Other preventive recommendations and counseling regarding zoonotic diseases

## Follow-up plan:

- Establish a plan for follow-up based on assessment and future care recommendations
- Set expectations for next visit

## Documentation:

- Thorough documentation of the patient visit