

8 Healthy Ways to Spoil Your Dog



When those big puppy dog eyes beg for an extra treat, do you always have the willpower to say no? We often can't help [spoiling our dogs](#). But sometimes a little too much love can have [unhealthy consequences](#). Fortunately, you don't have to refrain from spoiling your pet entirely. Here are eight healthy ways to pamper your pooch.

1. Make some DIY dog treats

Treats are one of the most common ways we spoil our dogs. And if your dog is a really good boy or girl, they might have some extra pounds to show for it. Besides treating in moderation, another way to avoid medical problems is to make your own healthy dog treats. Store-bought treats often contain preservatives, allergens or just plain unhealthy ingredients. But with homemade treats, you can control exactly what goes into them to suit your dog's diet.

There are three main types of DIY dog treats: baked biscuits, frozen goodies and bite-sized portions of "people food." You can choose from many [baked treat recipes](#) out there, which are easy to store and carry in your pockets. As for cold treats, the [American Kennel Club](#) recommends freezing banana with peanut butter (xylitol-free) to reward your dog on a hot day. And to add some variety in your dog's diet,

learn which [human foods](#) they can eat, such as chopped carrots, and offer them in moderation. They'll never miss those unhealthy store-bought treats.

2. Learn doggie massage



It's not just humans who enjoy being pampered with a massage. Dogs also can benefit from canine massage therapy. According to [PetMD](#), canine massage works much like human massage. It increases blood flow and lymphatic circulation, [relieves stress](#), aids muscles and boosts the immune system. It's also a way to strengthen your bond with your pet. Plus, as an added benefit, you could fortuitously uncover a new bump or sore spot on your dog that might need vet attention.

So how do you learn doggie massage? To start, ask your veterinarian what would be appropriate for your dog's individual needs. They might give you some basic massage pointers or refer you to a veterinary massage specialist, who can teach you more in-depth techniques. Generally speaking, use gentle, slow strokes to make the experience relaxing and comfortable for your pet. And if you're aiming to massage problem areas, such as sore joints on an older dog, watch closely for signs of discomfort.

3. Take a special trip

Most dogs appreciate a routine. But every so often, they could use a vacation just like you. Spoil them with a special trip — even just for a few hours — to a dog-friendly beach, hiking trail, dog park, etc. Or simply take a different route on your daily walks, and watch them marvel at all the new sights and smells. Of course, wherever you go, make sure your dog is safe and comfortable.

4. Pick out a new toy



What dog doesn't love a new toy? Toys enrich dogs' lives by helping to prevent boredom and stress. And rotating in new toys (or old ones you've kept hidden for a while) will make your dog's day anything but dull. Even better, bring your dog with you to pick out a toy at the pet store, as long as they're comfortable in that environment. Besides the typical [chew toys](#) and stuffies, look for puzzle games to stimulate your dog mentally and physically.

5. Schedule a puppy play date

If it's not naptime or mealtime, it's probably [playtime](#) for your dog. Dogs love playing with their humans, but they also can benefit from some canine play if they're

friendly with other dogs. Spoil your pup by inviting over one of their furry friends, and watch the play bows ensue. Or if you're not home during the day, consider enrolling your pet in doggie daycare. And if your dog isn't canine-friendly, you still can schedule a human play date — i.e., a dog walker — to get some energy out of your fur kid.

6. Try special dog training courses



Did you stop your dog's schooling after basic obedience? There are many special dog training courses available that will feel more like play for both you and your pup. If your dog has a great nose, try scent work classes, and watch what that nose really can sniff out given the chance. Your canine will love being able to indulge in the instinctual behavior. And if your dog can jump sky-high with boundless energy, consider agility training. Whatever type of class you choose will help to give your dog an outlet for their natural behaviors, and it will allow the two of you to deepen your bond.

7. Go to the vet (no, really)

So maybe your dog won't exactly feel pampered at the vet, but spoiling your animal with medical care is one of the healthiest things you can do. Don't skip those annual checkups, and head to the vet at the first sign of a problem. Remember, dogs often

hide pain and sickness, so it's important to take them regularly to a trained professional.

Plus, if you really want to be thorough in your healthy — but maybe not so appreciated in the moment — pampering, get your dog a good grooming, too. Dogs might not love having a bath or nail trim, but they'll definitely feel better for it.

8. Keep it simple



Dogs really don't need much to feel spoiled. When you walk in the door, they feel like they've hit the jackpot. Filling their food bowls is the highlight of their day. Or maybe it's when they see the leash come out for their walk.

So when spoiling your dog, keep it simple. They don't need elaborate birthday parties or fancy outfits. Just make time to focus solely on them every day. Relax together on the couch. Take a walk. Play. In a way, doing what your dog loves actually will end up spoiling you, too.

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