

Having FUN when it's TOO COLD outside

In nice weather, you and your pet may enjoy walks, runs or other exercise outside. Here are tips to keep your pet exercising and at a healthy weight when winter is here.

Keep those legs running

Winter is a time to keep to your shared exercise regimen, but be smart. After dark, you can't go throwing a frisbee in the park or taking a swim in the lake. And it could be too cold. Some cities have indoor gyms with dog-friendly spots for a warm run-around. Or you can turn your own house into a mini-gym with a game of fetch up and down the hall—or up and down the stairs— or a mini-obstacle course in the basement. For cats, dig up those feather toys and post-holiday cardboard boxes and go crazy.

DYK? Looks like hibernation

Our activity levels are dramatically affected by shortened daylight hours. If you get home and it's dark, you and your dog may be less inclined to want to go out for that walk. "I should be in a cave resting and staying warm!"

Cut calories

It's OK in winter to get a little less exercise, but to maintain a healthy weight, you need to watch your dinner plate—and your pet's food bowl. Check with your veterinarian about calculating the right amount of food for winter. And watch the holiday treats you give your cat or dog—stick to crunchy vegetables, meat and fish, instead of sugar-filled or high-carb snacks.

Big changes

Real physiological changes happen in a cat's or dog's body in the winter. Metabolism slows down to store energy more effectively and efficiently than in spring or summer. Winter is the time our bodies store more energy as fat.



Pause for paws

If it's particularly cold, your dog needs protective clothing (just like you): dog coats as well as booties to protect paws. Yes, your cat or dog has fur, but they've adjusted to the same environment you have—warm temperatures indoors thanks to heating and air-conditioning. They're not ready for below-freezing temperatures naked any more than you are.