



Many dog parents love outdoor adventures with their canine companions. Dogs' eager appreciation of nature's sights, smells and sounds is contagious! But as any seasoned outdoor adventurer knows, it's important to stay safe while you're having fun. So if you plan to explore the great outdoors with your dog, don't forget to take appropriate safety precautions. Please visit the **ASPCA® Virtual**

**Pet Behaviorist** at [www.aspcabehavior.org](http://www.aspcabehavior.org) to find any of the articles mentioned below.

#### GET READY TO GO

Whether you hike through the woods, spend the day at the beach or just take your dog for a jog in the park, proper gear and preparation are essential parts of a well-planned outing. Most dogs are rugged and ready for action—but they're not invulnerable to outdoor dangers.

#### FIRST, VISIT THE VET

Before you embark on your adventure, it's important to make sure that your dog is healthy enough for physical exertion. Her veterinarian should check for any health issues that may be aggravated by exercise. Here are some size, breed and age considerations:

- Deep-chested, narrow-bodied breeds, such as German Shepherds, Doberman Pinschers and Great Danes, are prone to bloat. These dogs should not be exercised right after meals.
- Breeds with short or flat noses (brachycephalic breeds) can have trouble breathing when exercised vigorously, especially in warmer climates.
- Exercise is great for energetic young dogs, but sustained jogging or running is not recommended for young dogs (under 18 months) whose bones haven't finished growing.
- Because large dogs are more prone to cruciate ligament injuries, arthritis and hip dysplasia, sustained jogging can be hard on their joints and bones, too.
- Sighthounds, like Greyhounds and Whippets, are built for short-distance sprinting, not long-distance runs.
- Once a dog hits her golden years, osteoarthritis can cause pain and lameness after strenuous exercise. It's much better to discover that your once-sprightly dog's joints can no longer handle long hikes before you hit the trail!

Also make sure that your dog has all the vaccinations she needs. A rabies vaccine is required by law in all states, and getting one is an important precaution to take—your dog might encounter wild animals like raccoons, skunks, bats or foxes, which sometimes carry the disease. Some areas of the country pose a higher risk of contracting other diseases, like leptospirosis. If you're traveling away from home, let your dog's vet know where you're going so that he or she can give appropriate care.

#### PREVENT COMMON PESTS AND PARASITES

Outdoor environments are great, but they're also a great place to pick up parasites, which are annoying at best. At worst, some parasites can

cause serious illness and even death. Fleas, for example, aren't just itchy pests. Their bites can cause extreme skin irritation and, sometimes, infection. They can multiply until you've got an infestation in your house or yard, and once they've multiplied, they can be difficult to exterminate. Fleas can also cause fatal anemia in dogs, and they might even be able to spread diseases to humans, like cat scratch fever. Ticks can cause Lyme disease, canine ehrlichiosis, canine anaplasmosis and Rocky Mountain spotted fever. These diseases pose a serious threat to your dog's well-being. Heartworms, transmitted through mosquito bites, are also potentially fatal. Other worms, such as hookworms and roundworms, can cause significant problems for your dog, and they can also transmit zoonotic parasite diseases to children.

The good news is that these days, you can find many effective products to protect your dog from parasites and parasite-related disease.

It's best to use both a product to prevent fleas and ticks and a product to protect your dog from heartworms. Ask your veterinarian for help choosing the right products for your dog, and always follow label directions.

#### CONDITIONING FOR YOUR DOG

If you decide to take up jogging one day, you don't just lace up your shoes, leave your house and run a marathon right away. You've got to start with a reasonable goal and gradually increase your speed and endurance over time. Though some are in great shape, dogs don't come ready-made for marathons either. Just like you, your dog needs conditioning to build up her stamina before you ask her to perform activities that require strength and endurance. So if you're starting a new jogging or cycling habit, or if you want your dog to accompany you on longer hikes, start with short workouts. This is especially important if your dog isn't in great shape yet. Overweight, thick-coated and short-nosed dogs may overheat more easily than others, and dogs carrying excess weight may be more likely to sustain physical injuries. For specific conditioning advice, speak with your dog's vet.

#### GET OUT THERE!

After you've made thoughtful plans, it's time to gather your gear and hit the road!

#### WHAT TO BRING: THE BASICS

No matter where you go with your dog, you'll need to bring a few essentials:

- **IDENTIFICATION** No matter how much you trust your dog to stick with you, dogs do get lost. A tempting squirrel darting across a trail, the sound of another dog barking in the distance or just a fascinating scent may prompt even the most obedient of dogs to investigate. That's why it's important to make sure that your dog always wears a collar with identification and rabies tags. Make sure your dog's ID clearly shows an up-to-date phone number where you, a friend or a family member can be reached. It's also a good idea to microchip your dog, just in case she loses her collar somehow.

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- **WATER AND A BOWL** If you're going to exercise your dog, you need to make sure that she stays hydrated. Bring some fresh water for her and a travel bowl.
- **FIRST AID KIT** Ask your vet for specific advice about what to put in your dog's kit. If you're visiting a location where your dog will likely encounter ticks, consider bringing a tick pick to remove any unwanted "passengers" soon after they've hitched a ride.
- **INFORMATION ABOUT THE LOCATION OF NEARBY ANIMAL EMERGENCY CLINICS** If you know where you'll be adventuring, locate nearby clinics in advance, just in case your dog needs fast veterinary attention.
- **ACTIVITY-SPECIFIC GEAR** Read on for recommendations related to your favorite activities.

#### JOGGING AND CYCLING

- If you plan to jog or bike in the evening, make sure you and your dog are visible to motorists. Consider investing in a reflective leash-and-collar combo.
- If you want your dog to run next to you while you ride your bike, you can use a special attachment that keeps your dog connected to your bike while you cycle, but frees her if she stops suddenly or quickly changes direction.
- If your dog pulls on-leash when you try to jog with her, consider using a head halter or a no-pull harness. (It is NOT safe to use these products if your dog is attached to a bike or anything else on wheels.) Please see our article on **Walking Equipment for Your Dog** to learn more.

#### AT THE BEACH, IN THE RIVER AND ON THE BOAT

- If you and your dog enjoy boat or canoe rides together, you may want to invest in a dog life vest. Not all dogs can swim if they fall into deep water. Although some take to the water naturally, others don't.
- If you and your dog are visiting a river, keep an eye out for snakes. Even if they're not poisonous, snakes can deliver nasty bites if curious dogs get too close.
- If you're visiting the beach, supervise your dog closely when she ventures into the water. Many dogs aren't prepared for the motion of the waves.
- Watch out for rip currents, which are most dangerous during high surf conditions. A strong current can quickly carry a swimming dog away from shore.
- Learn about marine life native to the area you're visiting. Jellyfish, lionfish, stingrays, Portuguese man-of-war and other animals on the shore or in the water can be dangerous to both unwitting people and dogs.
- If your dog has light-colored, short fur, she may sunburn easily. Areas with sparse fur, like the face and head, are most susceptible. Before heading to the beach, ask your dog's vet about safe sunscreen you can use.

#### HIKING AND CAMPING

- When hiking through the woods, keep an eye out for horseback riders and cyclists. When you see or hear one coming, move your dog to the side of the path. To learn about teaching your dog polite trail etiquette, please see our article on **Training for Outdoor Adventures**.
- Never let your dog run off-leash in hunting areas.
- Don't use a long leash or a retractable leash if you're hiking with your dog in wooded areas. Getting tangled in bushes and underbrush is no fun and can even be dangerous.
- If you're camping or hiking in colder areas, your dog may need a coat if she doesn't have thick fur. You can also get her some dog boots or smear pet safe salve on her paws for winter hikes. Snow and ice sometimes get packed between dogs' toes, which can be very painful!
- Watch out for dangerous plants. Some mushrooms, flowers and other flora are highly poisonous to dogs if eaten. Foxtails can cause trouble, too. These sharp, spiky grass seed heads, found in California and other western states, can get lodged in a dog's skin, nose, ears or eyes. Over time, they may migrate further into her body, making it virtually impossible to remove them. If eaten, foxtails can even burrow into a dog's throat, causing retching and gagging. It may be best to avoid hiking in areas while these dangerous plants are widespread.
- If you're hiking in remote areas, consider attaching some bells to your dog's collar to warn bears and other large predators of your approach.

#### DISCLAIMER

The ASPCA® Virtual Pet Behaviorist specializes in the resolution and management of pet behavior problems only. Only licensed veterinarians can diagnose medical conditions. If you think that your pet is sick, injured or experiencing any kind of physical distress, please contact his veterinarian immediately. A delay in seeking proper veterinary care may worsen your pet's condition and put his life at risk.



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