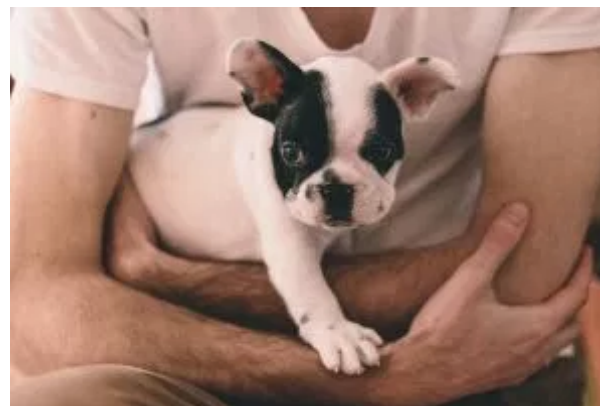


## Guide to Food Supplements for Dogs

Just like humans, dogs don't always get the right nutrition they need from their diet. Of course, the better the diet, the less need for supplements. But, getting the best nutrition from diet alone is unrealistic. Supplements can make the difference.



It's all about vitamins and minerals. Basic questions like, "Which vitamins and minerals?" "What is the MDA (minimum daily requirement?)" "What about trace minerals?" "Should I give my dog [a multivitamin](#) or mineral supplement?"

Perhaps the most important question about supplements is purity and quality. There are dozens of suppliers, some cheap, some expensive, some good, some not so good.

Other criteria include size and age of dog, and if supplements are being used to treat illness, disease or other deficiencies.

The first thing to learn is basic nutrition: What is nutrition, and how does food—and supplements—ensure good health and well being?

But clearly dogs are different than humans! Dogs are natural born athletes, designed to run forever, jump over fences, scale walls, swim across oceans. OK, stories of dogs swimming across oceans are a bit far-fetched. But when you see a dog at its peak performance, they seem to have limitless energy, endurance and phenomenal athletic ability. Oh yeah...and they bark.

## What Is Nutrition?

On just about every food product—human or animal—is the required “Nutrition Facts” breakdown, listing the various nutrients found in the specific food item being purchased. It should be required reading, along with the “Ingredients” label.

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics provides a simple summary of what is included in a Nutrition Facts breakdown. This breakdown includes: Fats, Sugars, Serving Size, Calories, Cholesterol, Sodium, Carbohydrates, Fiber, Protein, Vitamins and Minerals. With all that to consider, it’s easy to see why the phrase, “balanced diet” is so important.

## What’s In Dog Food?

Dogs thrive on a variety of foods.

Although the FDA says most commercial [dog foods](#) provide a balanced diet, many people feed their dogs homemade diets or a more high-end holistic/organic diet.

Holistic/organic diets are more expensive, but also more nutritionally rich and eliminate such things as preservatives, fillers and food colorings.

Raw food diets are common, with increasing trends towards whole food (organic) diets. Commercial dog food is losing its appeal.

Within the ingredients of commercial dog food, some items are best to avoid:

- Gluten
- Preservatives (BHA, BHT and ethoxyquin)
- Colors
- Dyes
- By-Products

Some believe wheat and soybeans are a leading cause of dog allergies, while others don't. Grain-free dog foods claim to alleviate allergies, but this too is debated amongst researchers and veterinarians.

Meat (Chicken, Fish) is the primary source of protein in dog food. Many pet owners split meat and carbohydrates 50/50, although some people don't believe dogs need carbohydrates at all.

Meat by-products are mainly animal parts like bones, blood, internal organs, fat and/or intestines.

Dogs in the wild most likely would eat the entire animal. But then, most breeds (including mixed) do not live in the wild.

Just like humans, fruits and vegetables are stressed as major sources of vitamins and minerals for dogs (and cats). High-quality grains like brown or wild rice are preferred over standard grains.

## Go Raw

Whether to go with dry or wet food really isn't the right question. What's right, is to go raw. Dogs—like any animal—need to eat what they are born to eat.

Processed foods are carbohydrate-rich, and for dogs, this causes many health problems, from overweight to allergies to arthritis. It's not all that different for humans who eat junk food. What is junk food? Junk food is food full of junk—stuff that has no nutritional benefit.

A raw dog food diet has many benefits:

- Firmer stools
- Improved digestion
- Healthier skin and coat
- Reduced allergy symptoms
- Better weight management

As an added benefit, almost all raw food mixes are organic (all the ingredients are organic).

Raw food mixes are a blend of protein and vegetables, often with supplements added.

One example might be chicken with the best parts of the chicken, including liver, heart, bone and eggs, mixed with such vegetables as squash, green beans, carrots, or any number of other vegetables.

Instead of chicken, there might be beef, bison, venison, duck, pheasant, and other game birds.

Fruits are also mixed in, like blueberries, cranberries, cantaloupe, etc.

Other ingredients—including supplements: Flaxseed, apple cider vinegar, Vitamin E (D, B12, etc.), parsley, garlic, zinc, iron, ginger, fish oil, kelp, sea salt.

## Multivitamins/Minerals vs. Condition-Specific Supplements

Multivitamins and minerals created specifically for dogs are the easiest to administer and the most cost effective. However, many people prefer [using supplements](#) that are condition-specific, such as skin, coat or joints.

Supplements may include probiotics for gastrointestinal balance and/or antioxidants to improve cognitive function.

## Dangers of Over-supplementing

There are dangers in too much of a good thing. Too much vitamin D can negatively affect bones and muscles. Excess calcium, or vitamins A and D can negatively affect bone, muscle and blood.

Some supplements may negatively interact with other medicines. And of course, like anything else involving your pet's health, always check with a veterinarian.

Supplements are not intended as cures. They may help improve conditions, but there are any number of other factors that can cause bad health, from neurological to genetic.

## Too Much Protein

In human and dog diets, protein gets way too much emphasis. Some people mistakenly believe carnivores only eat meat. Like humans, dogs need a balance of vegetables and fruits. Supplements found in fruits and vegetables can help balance out a protein-rich diet.

Fish oil supplements, along with vitamins C and E can reduce inflammation issues and help improve memory.

## Summary

Many factors determine what supplements are needed, from size and age to breed.

Puppies have different dietary needs than older dogs, not just in terms of growth, but

also exercise.

Supplements can address health in general, or be condition-specific: skin/coat, stool eating deterrent, hips/joints, digestive, bladder, and heart/blood.

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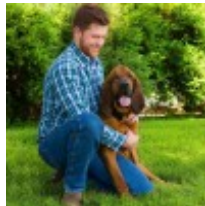
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November 12, 2017



**John Howes**

Pet lover & passionate blogger. I love to write about pet. I started this blog to provide advance materials for choosing the right products for your dog.

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