

Your German Shepherd Dog

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



German Shepherd Dogs: What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend, companion, and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like Shepherds and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Well suited as a companion, family dog, or working dog
- Energetic, active, and athletic
- Above-average intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Devoted, loyal, and protective
- Sweet, playful, and friendly
- Trusting and affectionate

However, no dog is perfect! You may have also noticed these characteristics:

- Easily bored if not given something to do, which may lead to barking or chewing
- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Overprotective of family and territory if not socialized properly
- Can have an unstable temperament if not bred properly, including excessive barking, hyperactivity, or aggression
- Suspicious of strangers
- Prone to a number of health problems

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! She is a faithful companion that can excel at most anything. With early socialization and confident leadership, she is a cheerful and dependable addition to any family.

The German Shepherd Dog originated in Germany in 1899. Initially bred as a herding dog, the Shepherd has since become the world's leading police, guard, and military



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Your German Shepherd Dog



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You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

General Health Information for your German Shepherd Dog

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your German Shepherd is more likely than other dogs to have problems with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your German Shepherd's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

Infections

German Shepherd Dogs are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections — the same ones that all dogs can get — such as parvo, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

Obesity

Obesity can be a significant health problem in German Shepherd Dogs. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

Parasites

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your GSD's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas and ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

Spay or Neuter

One of the best things you can do for your Shepherd is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth

working dog. The German Shepherd has consistently been one of the most popular breeds in the United States since the early 1920s with a rise in fame then attributed to canine film stars Rin-Tin-Tin and Strongheart. GSDs are favored working dogs because of their strength, intelligence, versatility, and obedient natures. The German Shepherd is unmatched in her devotion and courage. She is eager to serve a greater cause with her human companions. The German Shepherd is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 12-13 years.

Your German Shepherd Dog's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Shepherd. By knowing about health concerns specific to German Shepherd Dogs, we can tailor a preventive health plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in German Shepherd Dogs to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for German Shepherd Dogs. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the booklet, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your GSD looking and feeling her best.



Your Basset Hound

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Your German Shepherd Dog

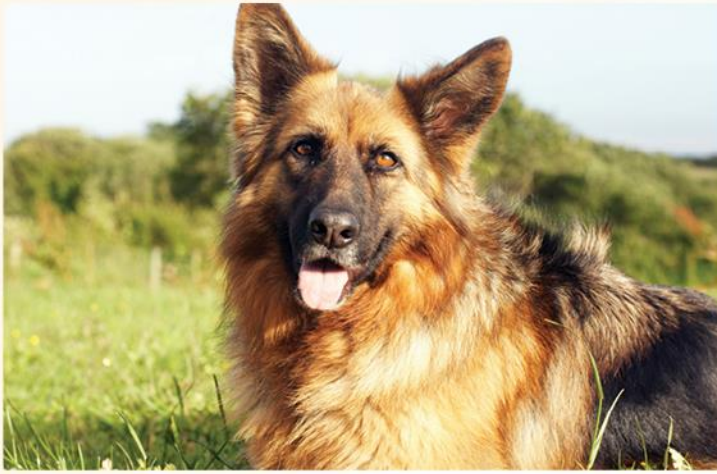
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inflammation of the long bones in the legs called eosinophilic panosteitis, or pano or eo-pan for short. It usually starts around six to ten months of age and shifts from leg to leg. We'll look for this condition upon examination; if your pal exhibits pain when the area is squeezed or palpated, we'll take X-rays to diagnose the problem. Panosteitis usually causes no permanent damage, but requires pain medication. If your dog has this condition and develops an abnormal gait to compensate for the sore leg(s), rehabilitation exercises may be required.

Epilepsy

There are three types of seizures in dogs: reactive, secondary, and primary. Reactive seizures are caused by the brain's reaction to a metabolic problem like low blood sugar, organ failure, or a toxin. Secondary seizures are the result of a brain tumor, stroke, or trauma. If no other cause can be found, the disease is called primary or idiopathic epilepsy. This problem is often an inherited condition, and German Shepherd Dogs are



commonly afflicted. If your friend is prone to seizures, episodes will usually begin between six months and three years of age. An initial diagnostic workup may help find the cause. Lifelong medication is usually necessary to help keep seizures under control with periodic blood testing required to monitor side effects and efficacy. If your dog has a seizure, carefully prevent him from injuring himself, but don't try to control his mouth or tongue. It won't help him, and he may bite you accidentally! Note the length of the seizure, and call us or an emergency hospital.

Heart Disease

German Shepherd Dogs are prone to multiple types of heart disease, which can occur both early and later in life. We'll listen for heart murmurs and abnormal heart rhythms when we examine your pet. When indicated, we'll perform an annual heart health check, which may include X-rays, an ECG, or an echocardiogram, depending on your dog's risk factors. Early detection of heart disease often allows us to treat with medication that can prolong your pet's life for many years. Veterinary dental care and weight control also go a long way in preventing heart disease.

Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, German Shepherd Dogs can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- Cataracts are a common cause of blindness in older Shepherds. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.
- Pannus is like a suntan on your dog's eyeball. In affected breeds, inflammatory cells infiltrate the cornea (the clear part of the eye), which then darkens with exposure to ultraviolet light, and may lead to complete blindness. It's considered to have a genetic component, since the

condition is predominant in certain breeds, like your Shepherd. We'll watch his eyes closely for early signs and start preventive eye medications if needed. Doggie sunglasses are also an option to help reduce sun exposure.

Cancer

Cancer is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your GSD will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his golden years. Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! The healthcare chart included in this care guide lists the specific cancers your pet may encounter. We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

Hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's)

Cushing's Disease is a malfunction of the adrenal glands that causes them to produce too much steroid hormone. This is a common problem in dogs, and your Shepherd is more likely than other dogs to be affected. The condition usually develops slowly, and the early signs are easily missed. Symptoms include drinking and urinating more than normal, increased appetite, and reduced activity level followed later by a potbelly, thin skin, and hair loss. Treatment usually includes oral medications and requires close coordination with us to ensure correct dosing.

Neurological Disease

A genetically linked neurological condition, known as wobbler disease or wobbler syndrome, causes a wobbly, drunken gait in affected pets. Wobbler disease is the result of a narrowing of the vertebrae in the neck that pinches the spinal cord and associated nerves. When pinched, the nerves do not send signals to the brain as they should causing the pet to be unable to feel his feet. The first signs you will often notice with wobbler disease are unstable hind legs, stumbling, and sometimes falling. Treatment options include medications, neck braces, rehabilitation exercise programs, and surgery.

- Degenerative myelopathy is a neurologic condition, similar to ALS or Lou Gehrig's disease in people, that causes weakness and poor nerve function in the hind legs. It affects GSDs more frequently than other breeds. If your dog has this disease, he will become increasingly weak and disabled in the hind legs, eventually suffering from paralysis in his hindquarters, which also leads to incontinence. Rehabilitation, exercise, acupuncture, and dietary supplements can be helpful, but there is no cure for degenerative myelopathy. A genetic test is available to determine whether your dog is at risk for this heritable disease.

Diabetes

Diabetes mellitus is a fairly common disease in dogs. Any breed can be affected, but German Shepherds have an above average incidence. Dogs with diabetes are unable to regulate the metabolism of sugars in their bodies and require daily insulin injections. Diabetes is a serious condition and one that is important to diagnose and treat as early as possible. Symptoms include increased eating, drinking, and urination, along with weight loss. If he shows signs, we will conduct lab tests to determine if he has this condition and discuss treatment

options with you. Treatment requires a serious commitment of time and resources. Well-regulated diabetic dogs today have the same life expectancy as other canines.

Anal Gland Problems

German Shepherds are prone to a painful, longterm condition in which the area around the anus becomes inflamed or develops sores. Signs include bleeding, constipation, licking of the area, smelly discharge around the rectum, and straining or apparent pain when defecating. This condition can be difficult to treat and requires lifelong medications, prescription food, and sometimes even surgery.

Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy “atopy”, and Shepherds often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

Taking Care of Your German Shepherd Dog at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we’ll give her the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Shepherds. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your GSD live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn’t put in her mouth.
- ✓ She needs a thorough brushing at least weekly most of the year. Twice a year she blows her coat and loses crazy amounts of hair; daily brushing is recommended during this time.
- ✓ German Shepherd Dogs generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!

- ✓ Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don’t worry—we’ll show you how!
- ✓ She has a high prey drive, so she needs to be leash walked and a fenced yard is a must.
- ✓ She’s a large, smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she’ll get bored. That’s when the naughty stuff starts.
- ✓ Naturally a bit wary, she’s distrustful of strangers; bond her to children early to trigger protective behaviors.
- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent and don’t give her people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, but don’t overdo it at first.

What to Watch For

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your German Shepherd Dog needs help.

Office calls

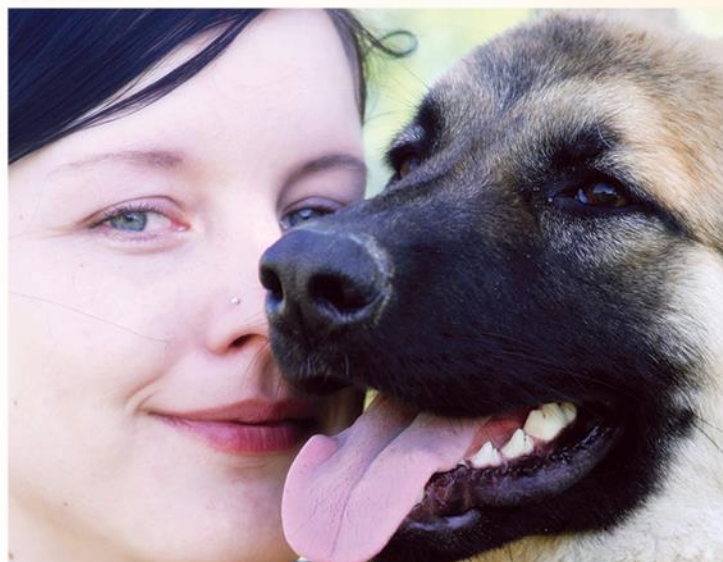
Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes

Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes



- ✓ Dry heaving or a large, tight, painful abdomen
- ✓ Greasy poops, weight loss, dry flaking coat
- ✓ Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- ✓ Coughing, exercise intolerance, rapid breathing at rest
- ✓ Drinks and urinates more, eats more; potbelly, poor haircoat
- ✓ Increased hunger and thirst, weight loss
- ✓ Straining to defecate, licking of the area around the rectum, smelly discharge or bleeding around the anus
- ✓ Ongoing vomiting, weight loss, and/or diarrhea
- ✓ Leg stiffness; reluctance to rise, sit, use stairs, run, or jump; “bunny hopping”

Your German Shepherd counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to provide the best health care possible: health care that's based on her breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

Pet Medical Center
254-690-6769

Genetic/DNA Testing

DNA analysis is a rapidly advancing field in healthcare for people and pets. Luckily, technologies exist to screen for hundreds of inherited diseases in pets, just like in people. By screening each pet for as many genetic diseases as possible, we will be better prepared to care for your pet throughout life. This is an important step in caring for your pet because it's always better to know your pal is at risk for a genetic disease before the problem is untreatable.

In an effort to screen for as many genetically linked diseases as possible, we may recommend the **K9Genetics™ Disease Screen** to screen for more than 150 genetic mutations that cause disease.

Each **K9Genetics™ Disease Screen** Screens for

- ✓ Over 30 Musculoskeletal Problems
- ✓ Over 30 Metabolic Conditions
- ✓ Over 30 Eye Conditions
- ✓ Over 25 Blood and Clotting Disorders
- ✓ Over 10 Immune System Diseases
- ✓ Over 10 Urinary Tract Problems
- ✓ 10 Skin and Hair Conditions
- ✓ Cancer
- ✓ Dental Disease
- ✓ Drug Metabolism
- ✓ Heart Problems
- ✓ Hormonal Conditions
- ✓ Liver/Gastrointestinal Diseases
- ✓ Midline Defect
- ✓ Neuromuscular Diseases
- ✓ Reproduction Problems
- ✓ Respiratory Conditions

This one-time test is one of the best decisions you can make for your German Shepherd's medical care. With less than a few drops of blood, we'll have a lifetime of information to assist us in providing the very best care of your friend's unique and individual needs throughout her life!

For more information about genetic testing, visit <http://www.k9genetics.com>

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Puppy to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your German Shepherd Dog Healthy <i>Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in</i>		Age	Services We'll Provide	German Shepherd-Specific Problems We're Looking For
			8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care
○	10–12 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA) and Tricuspid valve dysplasia Megaesophagus von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) and Hemophilia	
○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Schedule spay/neuter surgery Discuss obedience and grooming	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA) and Tricuspid valve dysplasia Megaesophagus von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) and Hemophilia	
○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Neurologic assessment Blood disorder evaluation Pre-surgical diagnostics Spay/neuter surgery Discuss bloat, stomach tack, and microchipping	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA) and Tricuspid valve dysplasia Megaesophagus Panosteitis and Osteochondritis Desicans (OCD) Epilepsy von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) and Hemophilia	
○	6 months through 1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Neurologic assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts Patent Ductus Arteriosus (PDA) and Tricuspid valve dysplasia Megaesophagus Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, Panosteitis, and Osteochondritis Desicans (OCD) Epilepsy von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) and Hemophilia All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan	

Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your German Shepherd Dog Healthy		Age	Services We'll Provide	German Shepherd-Specific Problems We're Looking For
Adult: 18 to 39 Years	○	1 through 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Neurologic assessment Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Pannus Mitral valvular disease and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) Allergies and Perianal fistula Megaesophagus and Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI) and Diabetes Hip dysplasia and Elbow dysplasia Epilepsy and Wobbler syndrome von Willebrand's Disease (vWD) and Hemophilia
		7 years through 9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Neurologic assessment Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Pannus Mitral valvular disease and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) Allergies and Perianal fistula Megaesophagus and Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI), Diabetes, and Cushing's disease Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) Epilepsy, Wobbler syndrome, and Degenerative myelopathy (DM) Hemangiosarcoma, Lymphoma, Osteosarcoma, and Melanoma
		10 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Neurologic assessment Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Pannus Mitral valvular disease and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM) Allergies and Perianal fistula Megaesophagus and Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) Exocrine Pancreatic Insufficiency (EPI), Diabetes, and Cushing's disease Hip dysplasia, Elbow dysplasia, and Intervertebral disc disease (IVDD) Epilepsy, Wobbler syndrome, and Degenerative myelopathy (DM) Hemangiosarcoma, Lymphoma, Osteosarcoma, and Melanoma
Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years	○			
Golden Years: 60+ in People Years	○			

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.