

# Your Golden Retriever

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## Golden Retrievers: 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 Goldens and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Even-tempered, affectionate, and happy-go-lucky
- Good with kids and other pets
- Large, strong, and athletic
- Above-average intelligence and trainability when positive reinforcement training methods are used
- Loves to play games, especially fetch
- People-oriented and eager to please

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

- Sheds quite a bit
- Can be rambunctious and rowdy, especially as a younger dog
- Needs a lot of activity and mental stimulation to avoid boredom vices
- Is a bit “mouthy”—likes to carry and chew things
- Has a tendency to bark or howl when excited or faced with the unfamiliar
- 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! A joyful playmate and a reliable shoulder to lean on, the Golden is often referred to as America's sweetheart.

Golden Retrievers were first bred in the early 1800s in Scotland as hunting dogs. Although they are still used for hunting, Goldens also excel at many other activities, including search and rescue jobs and guide work. They require ample exercise—swimming in particular is a great



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## General Health Information for your Golden Retriever

### *Dental Disease*

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Golden 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 Golden'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*

Golden Retrievers 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 Golden Retrievers. 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 Golden'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 Golden 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 extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior

outlet for their endless energy, and most Golden Retrievers love it! Their beautiful coats require brushing and in some climates a summer trim may be in order. Golden Retrievers are intelligent, understanding, and eager to please their families. The Golden Retriever is a generally healthy breed with an average lifespan of 10-15 years.

## Your Golden Retriever'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 Golden. By knowing about health concerns specific to Golden Retrievers, 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 Golden Retrievers 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 Golden Retrievers. 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 Golden looking and feeling her best. 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.



- remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.
- Glaucoma, an eye condition that affects Golden Retrievers and people too, is an extremely painful disease that rapidly leads to blindness if left untreated. Symptoms include squinting, watery eyes, bluing of the cornea (the clear front part of the eye), and redness in the whites of the eyes. Pain is rarely noticed by pet owners though it is frequently there and can be severe. People who have certain types of glaucoma often report it feels like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick! Yikes! In advanced cases, the eye may look enlarged or swollen like it's bulging. We'll perform an annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and start treatment as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms, don't wait to call us, go to an emergency clinic!
  - Distichiasis is a condition caused by extra hairs that grow inside of the eyelid and rub on the surface of the eye. This is one of the most commonly inherited diseases in dogs,



and your Golden is more likely than other dogs to develop this painful condition. If untreated, these abnormal hairs can cause corneal ulcers and chronic eye pain. Several treatment options are available, and the prognosis is good once the hairs have been permanently removed.

### *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 Goldens 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.

- Allergies, swimming, overgrowth of hair in the ear canals, and accumulation of earwax can all predispose your dog to ear infections, which are painful and annoying. Goldens are very often afflicted by allergies, which can cause itching and inflammation in the ears and elsewhere. The earlier we diagnose and treat these ailments, the less discomfort and pain your pet will suffer. Be sure to call us if you notice him scratching or shaking his head, a foul odor from the ears, or if his ears seem painful to the touch. By monitoring for ear infections and treating them early, we also reduce the likelihood of eardrum damage that can lead to deafness. Most ear infections tend to recur until we work together to control the underlying cause.

### *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 Golden Retrievers 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*

Some Golden Retrievers inherit a heart condition known as aortic stenosis. This disease causes a partial obstruction to the blood flow leaving the heart, which means the heart must work harder to pump enough blood to the body. If the condition is severe, your dog may faint or seem to run out of energy during exercise. He may also have difficulty breathing, cough frequently, or have stunted growth. We'll test for this disease if your pet has any of these symptoms and discuss treatment options with you if the condition is indicated.

- Golden Retrievers are also especially prone to a life-threatening heart condition known as dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, in which the heart becomes so large, thin, and weak that it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. As this problem advances, your pet may act weak or tired, faint or collapse, breathe in a labored way, or cough. We'll conduct a yearly electrical heart screening (ECG) and/or an echocardiogram to look for abnormal heart rhythms as early as one year of age. If indicated, treatment includes medication and dietary supplementation.

### *Diabetes*

Diabetes mellitus is a fairly common disease in dogs. Any breed can be affected, but Goldens 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.

### *Liver Problems*

Your Golden is more likely than other dogs to have a liver disorder called portosystemic shunt (PSS). Some of the blood supply that should go to the liver goes around it instead, depriving the liver of the blood flow it needs to grow and function properly. If your friend has PSS, his liver cannot remove toxins from his bloodstream effectively. To check for this problem, we'll conduct a liver function test in addition to a standard pre-anesthetic panel every time he undergoes anesthesia. If he develops symptoms such as stunted growth or seizures, we'll test his blood and possibly conduct an ultrasound scan of his liver. Surgery may be needed, but in some cases, we can treat with a special diet and medication.

### *Bleeding Disorders*

Your Golden Retriever is prone to a bleeding disorder called hemophilia. We'll conduct diagnostic testing to assess his

blood clotting time before we perform surgery. This is an important test as we may not otherwise know whether your pet has hemophilia until severe bleeding occurs during surgery or after a serious injury.

### *Thyroid Problems*

Goldens are prone to a common condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, fearfulness, aggression, and other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood test annually to screen for this disease. Treatment is usually as simple as replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

## **Taking Care of Your Golden Retriever 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 Goldens. 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 Golden 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.
- ✓ Golden Retrievers 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's a 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.
- ✓ She excels at dog sports like flyball, agility, dock diving, and obedience events.
- ✓ She has a passion for water, and swimming is a perfect form of exercise for this water retriever.
- ✓ 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 Golden Retriever 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
- ✓ Increased hunger and thirst, weight loss
- ✓ Slow or stunted growth; sometimes seizures after eating
- ✓ Dull coat, hair loss; sluggish, weight gain

### 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
- ✓ Any abnormal shaking, trembling, or excessive involuntary tremors
- ✓ Fainting, weakness, cough, or shortness of breath during exercise
- ✓ Fainting, collapse; breathing issues, coughs when resting
- ✓ Bruises easily or bleeds a lot even from small wounds

## **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 Golden Retriever'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>

Your Golden 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**

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# Puppy to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

				Golden Retriever-Specific Problems We're Looking For	
		Age	Services We'll Provide		
<b>How We'll Keep Your Golden Retriever Healthy</b> <i>Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17</i>		8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination  Eye disease screen Heart health check Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Distichiasis Aortic stenosis and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Hemophilia	
	○	10–12 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis Aortic stenosis and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Hemophilia	
	○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Schedule spay/neuter surgery Discuss obedience and grooming	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis Aortic stenosis and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Allergies and Ear infections Hemophilia	
	○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation Pre-surgical diagnostics Spay/neuter surgery Discuss bloat, stomach tack, and microchipping	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis Aortic stenosis and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Allergies and Ear infections Hip dysplasia and Elbow dysplasia Hemophilia	
	○	6 months to 1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis and Cataracts Aortic stenosis and Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Allergies and Ear infections Hip dysplasia and Elbow dysplasia Hemophilia  All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan	

# Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Golden Retriever Healthy				Golden Retriever-Specific Problems We're Looking For
		Age	Services We'll Provide	
Golden Years: 60+ in People Years	○	10 years and older	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head-to-tail physical examination</li> <li>Eye disease screen</li> <li>Heart health check</li> <li>Skin and coat exam</li> <li>Endocrine screening</li> <li>Bone and joint exam</li> <li>Neurological assessment</li> <li>Cancer screen</li> <li>Blood disorder evaluation</li> <li>Parasite prevention</li> <li>Vaccinations</li> <li>Discuss mental and physical well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis, Cataracts, and Glaucoma</li> <li>Aortic stenosis, Portosystemic shunt (PSS), and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)</li> <li>Allergies and Ear infections</li> <li>Diabetes and Hypothyroidism</li> <li>Hip dysplasia and Elbow dysplasia</li> <li>Epilepsy and Degenerative Myelopathy (DM)</li> <li>Mast cell tumors, Lymphoma, and Hemangiosarcoma</li> <li>Hemophilia</li> </ul>
		7 years through 9 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head-to-tail physical examination</li> <li>Eye disease screen</li> <li>Heart health check</li> <li>Skin and coat exam</li> <li>Endocrine screening</li> <li>Bone and joint exam</li> <li>Neurological assessment</li> <li>Cancer screen</li> <li>Blood disorder evaluation</li> <li>Parasite prevention</li> <li>Vaccinations</li> <li>Discuss mental and physical well-being</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis, Cataracts, and Glaucoma</li> <li>Aortic stenosis, Portosystemic shunt (PSS), and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)</li> <li>Allergies and Ear infections</li> <li>Diabetes and Hypothyroidism</li> <li>Hip dysplasia and Elbow dysplasia</li> <li>Epilepsy and Degenerative Myelopathy (DM)</li> <li>Mast cell tumors, Lymphoma, and Hemangiosarcoma</li> <li>Hemophilia</li> </ul>
		5 years through 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Head-to-tail physical examination</li> <li>Eye disease screen</li> <li>Heart health check</li> <li>Skin and coat exam</li> <li>Endocrine screening</li> <li>Bone and joint exam</li> <li>Neurological assessment</li> <li>Cancer screen</li> <li>Blood disorder evaluation</li> <li>Parasite prevention</li> <li>Vaccinations</li> <li>Discuss behavior and nutrition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis, Cataracts, and Glaucoma</li> <li>Aortic stenosis, Portosystemic shunt (PSS), and Dilated Cardiomyopathy (DCM)</li> <li>Allergies and Ear infections</li> <li>Diabetes and Hypothyroidism</li> <li>Hip dysplasia and Elbow dysplasia</li> <li>Epilepsy and Degenerative Myelopathy (DM)</li> <li>Mast cell tumors and Lymphoma</li> <li>Hemophilia</li> </ul>
Adult: 18 to 39 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.