



## Treat Your Pet to a Longer, Healthier Life

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Here at South Anderson Veterinary Clinic, we understand that devoted pet owners enjoy giving their four-legged friends extra treats and seeing how happy it makes them. Too many treats, however, can negatively impact your pet's health. The treats themselves are not a bad thing, but they do contain calories, and unused calories lead to weight gain. Obesity is considered a nutritional disorder and has become the most common nutritional disorder that we see in small animal medicine. Extra weight will make it more difficult for your pet to get around, leading to a less energetic and playful dog or cat. It can cause difficulty breathing and exercise intolerance, as well as more severe health problems. Obesity is a dangerous medical condition that can become life-threatening.

Research in both humans and animals has suggested that increased weight leads to a shorter lifespan. Extra weight places excessive stress on joints which can lead to joint pain, arthritis, and ligament issues. Obese or overweight animals are often found to have high blood pressure which can lead to more severe disease in areas of the body such as the kidneys, heart, and eyes. Obesity can also increase the risk of developing insulin resistance and diabetes. Preventing weight gain is the best way to decrease the risk of your cat or dog developing such health problems. However, it is never too late to begin helping your companion lead a healthier lifestyle.

If you suspect that your pet is overweight, it is very important to speak with a veterinarian before making any lifestyle changes for them. There are some diseases, such as thyroid disease, that can cause an animal to gain weight and should be addressed before making any other lifestyle changes. There are also multiple factors to consider when putting them on a diet. It is important to know how many calories your pet needs on a daily basis, and this is affected by many things such as breed, what stage of they are in, what type of lifestyle they lead, whether or not they are spayed/neutered, and what their ideal weight is. The good news is you will most likely still be able to give your companion treats. You may simply need to reduce the amount of treats, or change to a different type of treat. The doctors of South Anderson Veterinary Clinic are all very knowledgeable and can help you decide what the best plan is for your beloved pet.

There are some things you can look for at home to help you decide when to consult with a professional. If you cannot easily feel your cat or dog's ribs while pushing slightly on the chest, they may be overweight. Having a broad, flat back with no visible waist is a strong sign of obesity. Some overweight pets, especially cats, may have a large abdomen that hangs down. This can also be caused by certain disease processes, so as mentioned before, it is very important to speak with a veterinarian about any concerns you have for your furry friend's weight. The doctors and staff of South Anderson Veterinary Clinic strive to help you and your companion animals have more quality days together, so please contact us with any questions or concerns.