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Caring for your Pet through the Years

We want to help your dog or cat live as long as possible, and be as healthy as possible. To accomplish this, we have several recommendations for total health care, in addition to routine vaccinations:

For pets less than 5 years - In addition to annual vaccinations, we recommend an annual exam, and at home dental care. We provide the physical exam at every vaccination appointment. For dental care you can use a soft, pediatric toothbrush, or a rag wrapped around your finger, to apply the dental prophylaxis material to the teeth and gums 2-3 times a week. This care slows the development of gingivitis and periodontal disease - infections that can lead to kidney and liver disease, as well as abscessed, painful teeth. After the age of three, some vaccinations will not need to be given annually, and we may start to give them every other year.

For pets 5-7 years - as well as the annual physical exam and good dental care, a yearly urinalysis is recommended. Testing the urine is an excellent indicator of kidney health. It can also screen for diabetes and liver disease. Catching these problems early makes their management much more successful. If your pet is especially prone to getting dental tartar a thorough dental cleaning including ultrasonic cleaning and fluoride polish may be necessary. Small breed dogs and some cats are much more likely to develop significant tartar, even with good at home care. Some vaccinations will not need to be given annually and we may start to give them every other year.

For pets 7 years and up - a twice yearly physical exam is now recommended. As well as a urinalysis, a complete blood profile should be performed. A complete blood profile screens the liver, kidneys, blood sugar, potassium, cholesterol, heart, and anemia, and can include a thyroid. Once again, problems with all these areas are much more treatable when they are diagnosed early. In addition, a blood pressure, an EKG or a chest x-ray may be indicated if there are abnormal findings on the physical that suggest heart or lung problems. There are several other advanced screenings that can be done depending on your pet's age, breed and medical history. Ultrasound is a very effective screening tool as well as the Tonopen test for glaucoma. Your veterinarian will discuss these tests with you and make recommendations.

Many pets this age do require a dental cleaning. A thorough dental cleaning in dogs and cats does require an anesthetic. We have a special type of anesthetic that makes it possible for us to safely anesthetize geriatric pets. This anesthetic is very fast-acting, supports the blood pressure well, and doesn't affect the liver and kidneys.