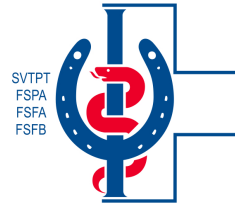




SCHWEIZERISCHE TIERÄRZTLICHE
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SCHWEIZERISCHER VERBAND FÜR TIERPHYSIOTHERAPIE®
FÉDÉRATION SUISSE DE PHYSIOTHÉRAPIE POUR ANIMAUX
FEDERAZIONE SVIZZERA DELLA FISIOTERAPIA PER ANIMALI
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How much exercise do growing dogs need?

A puppy spends the first three weeks mainly sleeping and drinking. Only from the 4th week of life does the puppy begin to explore its environment and continuously expand its range of movement. For the normal development of the brain, stimuli from movement are essential in addition to impressions from the environment and interactions with the mother, siblings and people. The more impulses the movement apparatus triggers in the brain, the better it will develop.

With increasing age, movements become more coordinated and varied. The puppy moves until it is tired and then sleeps until the next phase of wakefulness and movement. At eight weeks of age, puppies are already active for around 6-7 hours a day without being restricted by their mother. The play phases, which are spread throughout the day, last 30-40 minutes each, but can last an hour or more twice a day. In between, they sleep for 1-2 hours. The night's rest is around eight hours. The puppies decide for themselves how much they move around and when they are tired.

Dense bones and strong muscles are required

For the skeleton to support the weight of the growing body, it must be mineralized after birth, which is stimulated by loading the bones. In the same way, the growth plates of the epiphyses and apophyses must be subjected to pressure and tension so that they do not close prematurely and subsequently impair normal growth. The joint will only develop correctly in terms of form and function if all the bony structures involved in a joint are subjected to these compressive and tensile loads. Muscles must also be built up so that the weight can be transferred from the sole to the toes, which is a prerequisite for fast locomotion.

Diverse and varied movement is necessary for brain development

Physical activity promotes blood flow to the brain, supports the formation and networking of nerve cells and stimulates brain metabolism. Exercise is extremely important for controlling emotions and for memory and learning performance in puppies and young dogs. The various brain areas for perception, spatial awareness, body awareness, coordination and sense of balance are stimulated and further developed. Complex movement sequences can only be learned through repeated practice.

Playing promotes many skills

Exuberant play - and play always means that everyone involved is having fun - is particularly valuable for development. The playful loss of control during romping and tussling promotes the ability to react to sudden events. These skills acquired through play make the dog more adaptable to situations that may arise unexpectedly later in life. In addition, social competence, impulse and emotion control, frustration tolerance and risk competence are learned and promoted.

If everyone enjoys it, they are welcome to play "wildly".

While playing, the young dog learns to abide by rules and the importance of fairness, but also gets frightened or frustrated during the game and learns to deal with these emotions. Dogs that are often allowed to romp around with other dogs are generally less aggressive and more balanced in their interactions with other dogs.

Free discovery of the world together with their humans

Not restricting the puppy's need to move also means that it runs outside a lot and often off the lead, which is usually possible without any problems due to the puppy's innate instinct to follow. The puppy shows this drive up to around four months of age and this phase should be used to practice the recall in a playful way. This is because being kept on a lead is restrictive and often causes frustration in young dogs. In addition, the dog can only walk or trot on a lead and these gaits do not sufficiently stimulate the development of the musculoskeletal system. The dog also learns to walk on a lead later in life - so it is better to use the puppyhood to build up a secure bond and mutual trust.

After the various activities, the puppy usually sleeps for 1-2 hours by itself. Above all, it is important that it can sleep safely and peacefully at night.

Growing up needs muscle strength

Muscle development is particularly important for large-breed or heavy puppies because they gain body weight very quickly as they grow and have to move a lot of weight from an early age. Both overweight and underweight should be avoided. Well-developed muscles are necessary so that the puppy is strong enough as quickly as possible to stabilize the musculoskeletal system in the various gaits. With active puppies, this usually takes place through their self-chosen activities, but with lazier puppies it can be a challenge to find the right motivation to get them moving enough.

Recommendation - as much and varied exercise as possible

Free and varied exercise for puppies should be encouraged from the outset and they should also have plenty of opportunity to play with suitable conspecifics. Because there is no such thing as too much self-chosen exercise in healthy puppies. How far and for how long you take the puppy for a walk and when it needs a break depends on the stamina of the puppy itself. Overprotection and constant walking on a lead hinder normal physical and mental development.

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