



Pet Tricks

Stress-Free Vet Visits

EASY STEPS TO MAKE DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS MORE PLEASANT FOR YOU AND YOUR ANIMAL

By Juno DeMelo

Nail the Timeline

Your pet should get a checkup once a year, though senior animals may need to be seen more frequently. If you'll be transporting your dog in a carrier, help him grow accustomed to it first: Leave it out at least a week in advance (or all the time) and line it with a fluffy towel or blanket to lure him in. This may work for skittish cats too—simply placing a treat in the carrier won't always do the trick. (A cat may also dart out quickly after eating it.) Aim to take pets on regular drives so they don't associate the car only with the vet.

Gather Evidence

Before your appointment, write down any questions you want to ask in case you forget them in the exam room. Since animals won't always replicate problematic behaviors at the vet, try to catch them on video at home. Note the location of any worrisome lumps or bumps so you can easily find them (snip the hair a bit to help you mark the spot). And if your pet has been given a prescription by another vet, bring the medication to your appointment.

Keep Calm

Pack special-occasion treats, and withhold a little food the morning of your visit to make them extra enticing. About 15 minutes before you head out, spritz the inside of your car and anything you're bringing to the vet with a pheromone spray, like Adaptil. If you have an aggressive or anxious pet, ask to wait in the car until an exam room opens up. You can also request that your pet be examined in your lap or on the floor. If your pet is still stressed despite your best efforts, talk to your vet about prescribing something to help calm him.

OUR EXPERTS

KELLY C. BALLANTYNE, DVM, VETERINARY BEHAVIORIST AT INSIGHT ANIMAL BEHAVIOR SERVICES IN CHICAGO

MARTY BECKER, DVM, FOUNDER OF FEAR FREE HAPPY HOMES AND VETERINARIAN AT NORTH IDAHO ANIMAL HOSPITAL IN SANDPOINT, IDAHO

ANN HOHENHAUS, DVM, STAFF DOCTOR AT THE ANIMAL MEDICAL CENTER IN NEW YORK CITY

The Gear



DELUXE RIDE

This mesh-sided carrier folds flat and has a back pocket for treats. **TO BUY:** Frisco Indoor & Outdoor Soft Dog Crate, from \$33; chewy.com.



SIMPLE RESTRAINT

If your dog will need a muzzle, bringing your own can make him more comfortable. This one is adjustable and easy to slip on and off. **TO BUY:** Four Flags Over Aspen Original Quick Muzzle for Dogs, from \$10; fourflags.com.



SOOTHING SPRAY

Dog moms give off pheromones to help soothe their nursing pups. This synthetic version has a similarly calming effect. **TO BUY:** Adaptil Travel, \$35; petsmart.com.