

Is Your Dog's Food Healthy? Here's How You Can Tell



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Since most dogs will eat anything they can get their paws on, it's up to us humans to make sure they're getting all the nutrition they need. That includes everything from their treats to their regular meals.

These days, you'll find a ton of dog foods available on the market. Factors such as organic food, added nutrients, and different flavors are all available to keep your pooch satisfied.

But the dog food industry is not regulated nearly as closely as human food. And not all dog foods are created equal. So, how can you be sure your dog is getting the food that keeps them fed and healthy?

We've rounded up some ingredients to watch out for in your dog food (along with a few other considerations), so you can be sure your dog is getting exactly the diet they need.

Dog Food Ingredients to Avoid

We're so picky about what we feed to our family these days - and rightly so! Many of us carefully select organic produce and religiously check the labels on canned or packaged foods before purchasing.

So, why should the same not be true for the meals we purchase for our dogs? Some [ingredients commonly found](#) in dog foods are best avoided:

Ethoxyquin

You'll spot this ingredient fairly frequently in dog foods as it's commonly used as a preservative in them. What you might not know, however, is that this ingredient was originally developed as a herbicide. You wouldn't let your dog eat weed killer in the backyard, so you certainly don't want anything resembling it hiding in their kibble.

In fact, many veterinarians are now spotting trends between ethoxyquin and health problems in dogs including liver and kidney damage, several cancers, and blindness.

BHA & BHT

BHA (Butylated-hydroxyanisole) and BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) are commonly found in both dog and human foods. Their role in food includes [preserving the food](#) and avoiding food spoilage, but there is evidence to suggest that these ingredients can be extremely harmful and may be carcinogenic for both people and dogs.

Corn Syrup & Food Dyes

Dogs do not require or seek sweetness in their food and they sure don't care what color it is. But, for some reason, sweeteners and food dyes are often found in dog food. The sweetener can lead to weight problems and other health issues for your dog.

And the food colorings? The only reason they are in there is to make the food look "better" to humans!

By-Products or Meat Meal

A couple of words to look out for on your dog food labels include meat "by-products" or "meat meal."

This means that the "meat" element of the food has been produced using the scraps of dead, and even diseased, animals. Plus, you'll have no idea what animals that meat might be made from, but it can include chicken, lamb, beef, fish, turkey, and more.

Meat meal or meat by-product is essentially the scraps of the animal that wouldn't otherwise be used, including organs and tissue that could be diseased or include tumors.

Propylene Glycol

Does this ingredient sound familiar? That's because you may have noticed it in antifreeze products around the house. It's put into dog foods to reduce the buildup of moisture that could result in spoilage and bacteria growth.

Unfortunately, it also kills off any "good" bacteria and moisture that is essential to maintaining a healthy digestive system for your dog, eventually having the potential to cause digestive cancers or lesions.



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Be Careful of Toxic Foods

It's not just dog food that you need to watch out for, either. Humans are guilty of feeding their dogs all sorts of things that can be really bad for them.

Most of us are aware that things like chocolate and caffeine are toxic to dogs. But there are lots of other [human foods dogs can't eat](#) that we may end up feeding them from scraps on our plate.

Some “human” foods that frequently end up in the dog’s bowl when they shouldn’t include:

- Grapes and raisins
- Onions, garlic, and other alliums
- Cherries
- Avocado
- Macadamia nuts
- Ice cream

These [foods are bad for dogs](#), and some can even be fatal. So, before you go adding fruits, vegetables, or other items to your dog’s bowl, be sure it’s something that will keep them healthy rather than doing them harm.

Age & Stage

Just like people, dogs' nutritional requirements change as they grow older. That’s why dog food is divided into several stages of [puppyhood](#), adolescence, and adulthood.

Not only that, but many dog foods are created specifically for older dogs who have become a little arthritic and stiff in the joints.

These foods all have different fat content and nutritional value, and it’s essential that you choose the right one for your dog’s age and stage. It’s also important to feed them the right amount as prescribed by your vet and the feeding guidelines on the dog food. Doing otherwise might lead to weight issues or malnutrition.

Listen to Your Vet

For dogs that are elderly, sick, or suffering from a lifelong condition (e.g. arthritis, diabetes, etc.), your vet may prescribe specific food or make recommendations on the “do’s and don’ts” of feeding them.

It’s really important for the health and happiness of your dog to listen to this advice and follow it to the letter. After all, you want your dog to be as active as possible for as long as possible and to do so happily!

Sources:

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