

Caring for Your Puppy in His First 3 Months

Whatever the breed, all puppies develop in the same way; they pass through the same stages from infancy to maturity. Not only is it interesting for you to know about these stages, it is also important that you should be aware of what your puppy is capable of at any particular time of his life.

Although puppies follow the same pattern of development, speeds can vary depending on the breed. Generally speaking, smaller breeds develop faster and attain maturity before they're a year old; larger-breed dogs can take as long as eighteen months to develop fully.

From Birth to Two Weeks

During these early few days, just like a new-born baby, your puppy will just sleep and suckle. But he'll be able to crawl. If he's cold he will seek the warmth of his brothers and sisters or his mother. Between 10 and 14 days, his eyes will open but his sight is weak for the first few weeks.

Week Three

Your puppy's teeth will begin to come through, and he'll learn to walk and drink. By the end of the third week, his sense of smell will develop. The breeder of your puppy should subject him to mild stress, but this isn't anything to be alarmed about. Simply picking him up and holding him in different positions is defined as mild stress. This will get your puppy used to human handling, and help him to cope later on in life.

From three to 12 weeks: Socialization

This is a critical time for your puppy. If he's to develop into a happy and healthy and well-balanced dog, he needs to experience humans, other dogs and his surroundings.

- **Stage One:** *From three to five weeks:* Your puppy will start to react to loud sounds, which is useful for mother when she growls at him to stop him feeding at will. Up to four weeks, his hearing, sight and sense of smell are working more efficiently. He'll bark, wag his tail and play-bite his brothers and sisters. He'll also begin to eat solid food and leave his sleeping area to go to the bathroom. From four to five weeks, he'll chase and play head shaking games; he'll also bare his teeth, growl, and carry things in his mouth.
- **Stage Two:** *From five to eight weeks:* Your puppy's face will become more expressive and his ears and eyes will be more coordinated. He'll join in playing games with his brothers and sisters and by the seventh week, he'll be ready to go to his new home. By the end of the eighth week, he'll be curious and willing to explore and investigate everything; but at the same time, he'll show signs of caution. In the final week before you take your puppy home, he should be taken away from his family and he should come into plenty of contact with humans -- children as well as adults. He should also get at least five minutes attention each day. From week six to eight, your puppy will begin to settle in with you and your family and he'll experience the



sights, sounds and smells of his new home. As soon as he crosses your threshold, you should begin housetraining.

- **Stage Three:** *From eight to 12 weeks:* Your new puppy will experience a very strong desire to please you as he assesses his position in a new family. You'll begin to teach him to play human games and help him to reduce his play-biting.

