



Puppy Expectations & Care by Age

(During the first 3 weeks of life puppies are unable to urinate and defecate on their own and will require stimulation to eliminate. The foster will gently rub a warm wet wash cloth or cotton pad on the puppy's genital area and anus which will allow them to eliminate. This should be done before and after feedings)

Very important that puppies remain on their bellies with feet on the counter when feeding, DO NOT turn them on their backs to bottle feed.

For more detailed instructions, please see our Puppy Foster Instruction Guide.

| Weeks | Feeding | Development |
|-------|---|---|
| 0-1 | Feeding a ½ tablespoon of formula every 2-3 hours, overnight can be every 3-4 hours. If mom is present, make sure puppies are nursing. Puppies can nurse up to 45 minutes. A lot of crying or activity can indicate a problem with mom's milk supply. | At one week of age the puppies should be handled minimally. They sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%. Puppies should be kept dry and warm to avoid low body temperature, which is the number one danger in puppies. |
| 1-2 | Bottle feed every 2-3 hours until their bellies are full but not bloated. Overnight feedings can be every 3-4 hours. | Healthy puppies should be round and warm. When you pick up the puppies they should wiggle, healthy puppies seldom cry. Ear canals should open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 to 14 days. |
| 2-3 | Bottle feed every 3-4 hours until bellies are full but not bloated. | Puppies begin to crawl and should be trying to stand. They will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws before their teeth come in. They should be teething at this stage. |
| 3-4 | Bottle feed every 4 hours until bellies are full but not bloated. Puppies may start to lap gruel from a bowl. | Puppies begin to see well and their eyes begin to look and function like adult dog eyes. Puppies will begin to clean themselves at this stage. If mom is present, she will continue to clean them. At 3 weeks, puppies are in their canine socialization stage. If they have siblings allow them to play often. |
| 4-5 | Bottle feeding may be necessary to keep puppies from crying of hunger. Puppies usually can drink and eat gruel from a saucer at 4 weeks. Weaning from the bottle should be gradual. | Begin housebreaking at 4 weeks of age. This can be started by using puppy pads or taking the puppy outside in a secure environment to eliminate. After each feeding place the puppy on the pad or outside to eliminate. Be patient, puppies may not remember each time. |
| 5-6 | Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken the gruel gradually be decreasing the amount of water that you add. Start to introduce dry food and water at this point. | At 5 weeks puppies will roam around the room and will need supervision. Be sure to offer different types of toys so they can explore and learn different textures. |
| 6-7 | By this age, puppies should be eating dry dog food well. Feed the puppies at least 3 times per day. Puppies like to eat frequently instead of one to two large meals a day. | By this age you have "mini dogs". They are able to groom themselves and play with each other and you. Some puppies can be food possessive and you may need to provide separate dishes for puppies to eat. |
| 7-8 | Offer dry dog food 3 times per day. Leave water at all times. Do not feed human food | Continue playing and socializing with puppies. You can start training sit, down. Roll over and come when called. |
| 8+ | Offer dry dog food 3 times per day. Leave water at all times. | By this time puppies should be ready for spay/ neuter surgery and adoption. |

