



# Fear Free Tips For Bringing Your Dog To The Vet



## Before Your Dogs Appointment:

1. **Practice gentle, positive handling at home and positive car rides:** Touch paws, ears, mouth, tail, and give a treat after each to help build positive associations. Take your dog on fun car trips that end somewhere they enjoy so they don't always associate the vet with the car.
2. **Keep experiences positive:** Avoid stressful activities like baths, nail trims and loud noises right before the appointment.
3. **Bring your dog hungry (if safe):** This helps your dog stay motivated by treats. If your dog has health concerns (such as diabetes), please consult us first.
4. **Use calming aids:** Pheromone sprays or collars, anxiety shirts or calming supplements (ask us for recommendations).
5. **Pack familiar items:** Bring high-value treats, a favorite toy, a small blanket, or a lick mat.

## Traveling To The Clinic:

1. **Make getting in the car a positive experience:** Encourage with treats and praise. A ramp may be helpful for dogs with mobility limitations.
2. **Keep your dog secure:** Use a properly fitted harness, seatbelt attachment, or travel crate.
3. **Limit visual stress:** For reactive or easily startled dogs, block car windows with sunshades or blankets.
4. **Drive calmly, talk softly and play calming music:** Slow acceleration, smooth turns, and a low voice help maintain relaxation. Classical music or pet-specific calming playlists can also help to reduce stress.

## When Arriving At The Clinic:

1. **Avoid the waiting room if it's stressful for your pet:** Call the clinic upon arrival and ask to wait in the car until the exam room is ready.
2. **Give space from other animals:** Move away from barking or tense dogs; distance decreases stress. Make sure to keep your dog on a short leash and avoid retractable leashes as they do not allow as much control.
3. **Use treats right away:** Offer treats as soon as walking in. Reward calm behaviours such as sitting, standing quietly, looking at you, friendly interactions, etc.
4. **Remain Calm:** Pets can sense and mirror their owners emotions. Therefore, try to stay calm, speak calmly and give yourself lots of time so you are not rushing.

## While At The Clinic And During The Exam:

1. **Allow low-stress handling techniques:** Our veterinary staff will use slow movements, gentle touch, treats, distraction techniques and will work to examine your dog where they are most comfortable (floor, table, in your arms).
2. **Advocate for your dog's comfort:** Tell the team what areas your dog does not like touched, any past negative experiences, and whether your dog fears specific people or certain equipment.
3. **Reward frequently:** Offer small treats or their favourite toy for calm behaviors throughout the exam.
4. **Ask your clinic if they use pheromones:** We can use calming pheromones to help make your dog more comfortable during their visit. Please let us know ahead of time if you would like this used.
5. **Ask about pre-visit medications if needed:** If your dog becomes anxious or you feel they could benefit from additional support, medication can make visits safer, kinder, and less scary.

## After the Visit:

1. **Reward again!** Treats, a toy, a slow sniff walk, playtime, or a quiet cuddle session.
2. **Allow your dog to decompress:** Avoid visitors, grooming appointments, daycare, or loud activities for the rest of the day.
3. **Monitor your dog:** Watch for signs of tiredness, soreness, or stress. Please contact us if you have any concerns.