



It is very exciting to bring home a new puppy! It's normal to want to immediately incorporate your new puppy into your life in every way possible. However, here are a few things to consider before bringing your new one out into the world.

Did you know ...

A puppy's immune system is not fully developed until they are 16 weeks old. This means your puppy is extremely vulnerable to potentially life-threatening diseases. Exposure to these diseases is as easy as setting your puppy down on the floor in a seemingly innocuous environment.

Our volunteers have worked hard rescuing your puppy from a shelter and done their best to give your puppy a strong foundation for a long and healthy life. They have provided love, high quality puppy food, and nutritional supplements. They have also dewormed your puppy and made sure that he or she received appropriate vaccines on time. They have carefully monitored for signs of illness to keep your puppy safe and healthy. Soon, if you decide to adopt, we will be placing this puppy into your care. Puppies, like babies, are more fragile and susceptible to disease than adult dogs. Please keep in mind that depending on age and vaccine status, your new puppy may not yet be fully protected against puppy diseases. **These diseases can be fatal.** Dr. Ron Schultz, who is a world leader in veterinary immunology, has spoken with our medical coordinator on this matter. He believes that a puppy's immune system is not fully developed until they are 16 weeks of age and vaccinated at that point or shortly thereafter (keep in mind that it takes 2 weeks for a vaccine to take full effect). Most veterinarians believe a puppy is fully protected around 2 weeks following their 3rd Distemper/Parvo vaccine (often called a DA2PP vaccine). The primary disease of concern for this area is Parvovirus. This is a devastating disease that can be fatal. The good news is that with care and diligence it is preventable!

At Operation Paws for Homes, it is our policy to not allow puppies to go home until they have had at least 2 puppy vaccines - which means you probably have at least have one more to go (some vets like puppies to have 4 sets of vaccines). The vaccination process begins when a puppy is 6 weeks old. Spacing is recommended to be 2- 4 weeks between each vaccine.

There are several factors that will determine a puppy's likelihood of getting Parvo.

1. Vaccine status - It is almost unheard of for a puppy that is 2 weeks past their 3rd shot or one that has been vaccinated when they were over the age of 16 weeks (given that the vaccine has had 2 weeks to take effect) to contract Parvo. Please vaccinate your puppy on time and give the vaccine time to work!
2. Exposure - If your puppy is not fully protected, there are *places that you should avoid bringing him*, as they are likely to have high concentrations of Parvo spores.
These places include: Dog parks, doggy day care, boarding facilities, pet stores, shelters, grounds around apartment buildings and other places that dogs frequent. Until your puppy is fully protected, we recommend that you also *not* put your puppy on the floor in the veterinary office.
3. Worm status - Your new puppy has probably been wormed several times already (this information should be written in the medical record in your puppy folder) but most puppies need to be wormed regularly until they are about 12-16 weeks of age. Your vet will let you know what they recommend. Puppies with heavy worm loads are much more likely to contract Parvo.
4. Stress - Some puppies handle stress better than others. High stress can break down the immune system, making a puppy more likely to become ill. Give puppy lots of love and attention especially during the transition period of coming to their new home.
5. Nutrition - Good quality dog food makes a difference! We know that it can be a little more expensive, but in the long run will pay off. Kirkland offers a 4-star super premium puppy food for about \$13 for 20lbs. Here is a link that will show the ratings of just about every commercial dog/puppy food. You may be surprised what they have to say! <http://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/dog-food-reviews/brand/> We also recommend adding probiotics to puppy's food during the transition period or longer to help keep them healthy. They can be purchased at most pet stores.
6. General health - Healthy puppies are less likely to contract disease. Everything listed above will help keep your puppy healthy and happy!

If you have any questions about this information, please contact our medical coordinator at laurie@ophrescue.org. Thanks for adopting and good luck with your new family member!

