

## North Portland Animal Hospital

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### Senior Health Maintenance Plan

Our goal is to help pets live a long, happy, healthy lives. We think preventive medicine is an important part of this equation. Beginning at around age 7 to 8, pets enter their senior years. While some senior pets do just fine, others may experience some difficulties or develop diseases associated with their natural aging process similar to their senior human counterparts. Some examples are diabetes, heart disease, kidney disease, endocrine disease, and cancer. The health of your pet can change rapidly, and sometimes these changes can go unnoticed. By working closely with your veterinarian, we'll do everything we can to help your dear friend enjoy their golden years.

#### Here's what you can do

*Watch for these signs and report them to your veterinarian*

- Just not acting like himself/herself
- Interacting less often with family
- Responding less often or less enthusiastically
- Changing in behavior or activity level
- Exhibiting bad breath/red swollen gums
- Having difficulty climbing stairs, jumping, or chasing a ball
- Exhibiting increased stiffness or limping
- Showing Tremors or shaking
- Drinking more often
- Urinating more often
- Changing eating patterns
- Noticeably gaining or losing weight
- Losing housetraining habits
- Changing sleeping patterns
- Becoming confused or disoriented
- Changing hair coat, skin, or new lumps or bumps
- Scratching more often
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

#### Our veterinarians recommend

**Physical Examinations** – Our doctors believe the physical exam is the cornerstone to good medicine. During the exam, your doctor will ask you some questions and take a history to determine how your pets doing. Your doctor will outline what steps should be taken to keep your pet healthy and comfortable.

- For healthy senior pets, we recommend annual exams
- For sick or unhealthy senior pets, we recommend semi-annual exams

**Vaccinations** - Give your pet the best defense against the spread of preventable diseases by specifically boosting their immune system against diseases. During exams, your doctor will review your pet's health, lifestyle (indoor or outdoor), socialization (obedience training and doggie daycare), age, genetic predispositions, and other environmental factors to determine the best vaccine schedule for your pet.

**Dental teeth cleaning** - By the age of 3 years, 70% of adult pets have developed the early stages of gingivitis and/or periodontal disease. To treat gingivitis and slow or stop the progression of periodontal disease, have your pet examined regularly. Your doctor will lift your pet's lip and examine the teeth and gums. Dental cleanings may be recommended as early as 3-4 years of age and may need to happen every 1-3 years.

*Benefits for keeping your pet's mouth and teeth healthy:*

- They'll live longer – untreated periodontal disease sends bacteria to the heart and kidneys, which ultimately leads to more serious problems.
- They'll have fresh breath for nice smelling kisses – if you smell bad breath, there's a good chance an infection is already present in the mouth.
- They won't be in any pain or discomfort from loose teeth or infected gums – some signs to look for: difficulty eating or losing weight.
- You'll save money in the long run having regular dental cleanings instead of costly periodontal treatments or extractions.

**Senior pet blood & urine test** - We recommend a blood & urine test on a regular basis (annual or biannual) to see how things inside the body are doing and to catch things early. We have developed a special, comprehensive senior panel at a reduced cost to encourage you to have your pet tested. For healthy pets, we collect this information to develop a baseline to compare tests run later in life.

**Fecal test & deworming** - There are several types of intestinal parasites that infect animals. Some parasites found in dogs and cats can also infect humans, sometimes leading to serious medical conditions. Detection and prevention are the best courses of action to protect your children and family. Your doctor will let you know if we should perform a fecal test and/or give a dewormer.

**Nutrition & exercise** – Older pets have different needs. Sometimes a special prescription diet is necessary to maintain good health. Your doctor will talk with you about what to consider. Appropriate exercise is also important. We'll talk to you about your pet's changing lifestyle and how they can enjoy a pain-free, active life.