

**Tips by Dr Laia**  
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Exercise, exercise, exercise. We all need exercise, even our four legged friends. Have you ever come home to find your young rambunctious Labrador retriever puppy has chewed a hole in your wall? What is more time consuming, a romp in the bark, or patching drywall?

In support of “CHEW” we offer these valuable tips while your pets are out frolicking.

First, make sure your pet is healthy and up to date on vaccines. Just like people, proper immunizations help prevent disease. The American Animal Hospital Association guidelines recommends dogs are vaccinated against Rabies (in accordance with Washington Law) and also against Canine Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus (extremely contagious) and Parainfluenza. Dogs that come into contact with other dogs, such as boarding and showing may also need a current Bordetella or Kennel Cough Vaccine. Pets that go hiking, camping and swimming may need to be vaccinated against Leptospirosis. There was an outbreak of this bacterial disease on Vashon Island in 2005.

Intestinal parasite preventatives are recommended for dogs that spend a lot of time outdoors and come into contact with feces from other animals. Please remember that “Poop Scoop” laws are in place for both human and animal safety. This is especially important at an off leash site. One of 10 dogs in the Northwest has a Roundworm infestation and shows no clinical signs of parasitism.

Micro chipping and proper identification are essential items at any off leash park, especially if your pet goes too far off leash. Micro chipping is a simple procedure that implants a microchip with a permanent code into your pet. Shelters and veterinary hospitals are equipped with scanners to check for this code and return the pet to her rightful owner. Also a dog tag goes a long way in returning a lost pet to his rightful home.

Proper pet etiquette is essential for the playground. An off leash area is not the place to go to train your dog to come. There is simply too much distraction. Pets that are dominant may not play well with others. Pets that are too timid may be overwhelmed. Don't attempt to change your pet's behavior by placing her in a situation where she is terrified and is beat up. If your pet is aggressive or dominant, take steps to avoid a confrontation. Inform other owners of your pet to avoid confrontations, and gradually expose your pet to the privilege of an off leash area.

The best tip is to simply scheduling regular check ups with our pet's Veterinarian, and developing a wellness program that is tailored to the needs of your four-legged companion. This simple task will ensure your pet's health and longevity, all vital necessities for any off leash area.