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## ***THE HAPPY HIP PROGRAM***

Guidelines for reducing the incidence of hip dysplasia in your puppy

### **STAGE ONE: From walking (3 – 4 weeks) to 3 months of age**

1. The Whelping Pen
  - Use mats or surfaces with better grip & footing (i.e. rubberized flooring, rubber-backed mats, rubberized underlay for under rugs...)
  - Avoid smooth slippery surfaces or just newspaper in the pens
2. Go OUTSIDE for part of the day to play & explore, once or more per day.
  - Experience different surfaces: grass, pea gravel, hills, mud, dirt, shavings, small puddles, leaves, sand, grates, concrete, asphalt... etc.
3. Targeted Free time, with the goal to enhance coordination, muscle building, and sensory stimuli
  - Items to step over (i.e. a litter box that needs to be stepped in / out of, or broom or mop handles, or PVC pipe.
  - Tunnels or items to crawl under or through
  - Washable cushions (i.e. thin cushions for plastic lawn furniture)
  - Kiddie pool filled with items (i.e. plastic bottles)
  - Any Fit Paws™ equipment
  - Plank of wood
4. Block the Stairs
  - Do not allow access to stairs prior to 3 months
  - Train use of mini-stairs (i.e. block of wood, or old aerobics step bench without riser)
5. Puppy Evaluations with your Rehab Therapist to check:
  - Hips
  - Sacroiliac joint (pelvis) and lumber spine (low back)
  - (And check the rest of the neck, back, & ribs)
  - Motor control, balance, & stability, abdominal and gluteal muscle activation
  - Have your therapist show you supine hip compressions

## **ADVICE FOR ANY STAGE**

6. Play with other puppies of similar size, energy level, age, & interests:
  - Supervise, & watch for signs of fatigue or if play is getting too rough
  
7. Play with gentle adults, or boring adults... Supervised!
  - Time is arbitrary. Watch the puppy and the play. Stop is too rough or if the puppy is getting tired or slow in his / her reaction times.
  
8. Avoid Doggy-Daycares unless:
  - It is well supervised, and efforts are made to put puppies of similar size, interest, etc together,
  - Puppies have mandatory 'time out' periods
  - Flooring is non-slip
  
9. Do find a puppy socialization class, and/or organize puppy play dates with other 'nice' puppies you meet on your walks.

## **STAGE TWO: 3-Months & Beyond**

10. Teach Stairs:
  - Carpeted or non-slip surface
  - On leash or harness (even better)
  - Following a treat with you helping to control the movement
  - Only supervised access until puppy is more coordinating and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  grown.
  
11. No Fat Puppies:
  - Monitor the puppy's weight
  - Use kibble from the meal as a treat, or get them interested in vegetables
  - No free feeding. Measure kibble and feed at set time(s).

12. Exercise: Continue with outdoor exercise & coordination training, but make it more challenging
- Different outdoor terrains & landscapes
  - CO-ORDINATION TRAINING:
    - i. Walking on a slightly elevated plank of wood
    - ii. Walking over poles (carpal height to start)
    - iii. Balancing practice (elevated, with front feet on one 'brick or stool' and rear feet on another. Could use 'Fit Pawds'. Work on endurance in this position.
    - iv. Balancing on unstable surfaces while lifting one leg at a time (use a mattress or thick cushion, a piece of plywood elevated by a small object, front legs higher than back legs, etc, etc)
    - v. Walking drills (forwards, backwards, sideways over different objects, and or different elevations such a backing up a hill)
    - vi. Stepping in, out, over, around, objects
    - vii. Crawling under objects that are about shoulder height (to get a crouch)
    - viii. Slowly following a treat to weave around objects (slow motion 'weave poles').

### **GLUTEAL BUILDING EXERCISES**

13. Step Ups: Place the puppy's front feet up on a platform (about elbow height to start, but no more than shoulder height, and a size that the puppy's whole body can fit onto). Then place one rear foot up on the platform. Now encourage the puppy to 'get up' onto the platform – perhaps enticed by a cookie or a toy. Repeat 5 times for each leg, once a day or about 3 x / week.



14. Land Treadmill – Rear Legs Only. If there is access to a land treadmill, firstly teach the puppy to go on and off of it by following treats. Then use it as an exercise. Place the front feet in the front space OFF of the treadmill (use some non slip materials there), and leave the rear legs on the treadmill. Turn the treadmill on the lowest speed (ideally under 0.5mph. If your treadmill does not go slower, then this might not be a good exercise to start with your young puppy). One person can provide encouragement at the front of the treadmill to keep the puppy staying in position, while the other person keeps track of the rear end, making sure that it stays on the treadmill belt. Do this for 5 – 10 minutes per session. Once or twice a week.



15. Land Treadmill – Backwards. If there is access to a land treadmill, firstly teach the puppy to go on and off of it by following treats. Then use it as an exercise. Set the puppy up on the treadmill backwards. Then turn the treadmill on the lowest speed (ideally under 0.5mph. If your treadmill does not go slower, then this might not be a good exercise to start with your young puppy). Have someone in front of the puppy to provide encouragement or treats. You then straddle the treadmill and hold the puppy in place (either with an arm under the abdomen or by using a harness.) Fair warning... this is not pretty to begin with. It's very unnatural and many dogs / puppies will try to just slide their back legs – 'as if they are putting on the brakes'. Persist in holding them if you can, until they start to step with their rear legs. Do this exercise for about 5 minutes per session. Once or twice a week.



16. 3-Legged Squats: Using two blocks or boxes, or stools (about elbow height), place the two front feet on one block and one rear foot on the other block, while leaving one rear leg on the ground. Now slowly take the 'grounded leg' off the ground by sliding it backwards until it is not in contact with the floor anymore. This should make the puppy straighten the rear leg that is on the block. Then place your hand UNDER the foot you slid off the ground, or grasp it around the hock, push the puppy's rear end towards the airborne foot and slowly lower that foot to the ground again. Do 10 reps on each leg. 2 – 3 times per week.



17. Sit to stands facing up hill or on an incline. Just as it sounds, ask the dog to sit, then stand, then sit again, and so on while facing up a hill. Do 10 repetitions, every day if able.



18. Three-Leg Standing while stimulating the gluteal muscles: Starting with the puppy standing on a stable surface (a progression would be to do this on an unstable surface), vigorously (and somewhat roughly) tap on one gluteal (just in front of the point of the hip). Keep tapping as you slide the opposite rear leg backwards and off the ground. Hold for only a couple of seconds. Replace the leg and start again. Do 10 per leg. 2 -3 x / week.



19. Diagonal Leg Standing: Starting with the puppy standing on a stable surface (a progression would be to do this on an unstable surface), lift one hind leg and its diagonal front leg off the ground. Easier is to do this with both legs lifting and held near to the puppies body. Harder is to lift the legs and hold them away from the body. Hold for about 10 seconds if able, and repeat 5 – 10 times on each diagonal pair. 2 – 3 x / week.

