



# Healthy Pet Tips

## Going off leash? Be on guard at the Dog Park.

*Off-leash dog parks are becoming increasingly popular in cities across the nation, and for good reason: they're a great place to let your dog run around, play and socialize! But keep in mind, dogs will be dogs—which is why owners need to be extra vigilant about these common dog park-related injuries and diseases.*

**Sprains:** Playful, excitable dogs are prone to accidents at the park—they can trip in a hole while running or maybe play a little too enthusiastically with a pal who's a bit too much to handle, resulting in sprained joints. Be sure to keep a watchful eye on your dog to avoid these types of incidents.

**Lacerations:** Sometimes even the friendliest wrestling match between dogs can turn into a tussle. Cuts and scratches are common dog park injuries, so keep your pooch away from aggressive dogs and look out for foreign objects like fallen branches that could cause harm while dogs are at play.

**Toxins:** Be aware of any chemicals used by park maintenance crews, like fertilizers, snail bait or pesticides. It's a good idea to use a damp towel to thoroughly wipe down your dog's fur after a romp in the park in order to get rid of any residue that could be licked off.

**Parasites:** Shield your dog from fleas and other bugs before visiting the park by using a topical preventive product. Also, be a good park patron by picking up after your dog and reminding others to do the same; worms and other internal parasites can be easily transmitted if fecal matter is ingested.

**Overheating:** No matter what time of year, always be sure to have plenty of water on hand to quench your dog's thirst and prevent overheating. Be sure to take frequent water breaks so your dog can stay hydrated. If your dog shows any signs of overheating such as excessive panting, vomiting or sluggishness, contact a veterinarian immediately.

### Bug off!

Dogs and cats of any age need protection from fleas and ticks. Aside from being a nuisance, they can also cause skin problems and spread disease. It's easier to prevent fleas and ticks than it is to fight them after they've already infested your pet—and your home.

Tall grass and weeds are very inviting to fleas and ticks, so be sure to keep your yard mown and trimmed. Outdoor flea sprays are also a good tool for keeping bugs at bay. Inside, clean and vacuum your home regularly, and wash your pet's bedding each week.

A monthly topical flea and tick preventive medication can help protect your pet from new infestations as well as kill any critters that may have already settled in your pet's fur. Your veterinarian can advise you on the right medication for your pet. And remember, VPI's Pet Well Care Protection provides reimbursement for prescription flea medications!



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