

# Your Great Dane

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



## About My Dog

Your dog's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of your pet's birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinary hospital's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Veterinarian's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Your Great Dane

## Great Danes: What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend and companion and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like great Danes, and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Affectionate, easygoing, and sweet
- Trustworthy and dependable
- A good companion and family dog
- Requires minimal grooming
- An excellent guard dog
- Courageous and loyal

No dog is perfect, though, and you may have noticed these characteristics, too:

- Takes up a lot of room due to her massive size
- Must be properly socialized with humans and other animals
- Prone to separation anxiety, with associated destructive chewing behaviors
- Can be independent and strong-willed
- Passes a lot of gas, sheds, and drools
- Has a short life span and lots of health problems

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's got her own personality, and you love her for it.

## Your Great Dane's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of him. That's why we'll tell you about the health concerns we'll be discussing with you over the life of your Dane.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they're related to your pet's breed. That





doesn't mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that he's more at risk than other dogs. We'll describe the most common issues for great Danes to give you an idea of what may come up. Of course we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide, and the health evaluation schedule it contains, helps us and you plan for your pet's health-care needs. At the end of the booklet, we've included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Dane looking and feeling his best. You'll know what to watch for, and we'll all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

### *Bloat*

Gastric dilatation and volvulus, also known as bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests. This means your Dane is more at risk than other breeds. Preventive surgery in which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it cannot twist is an option. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. The twisting cuts off blood supply to the stomach, and sometimes the spleen. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as 30 minutes. Your dog may retch or heave (but nothing comes out), act restless, have a pot belly, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). If you see symptoms, take her to an emergency hospital immediately!

### *Cancer*

Your great Dane is especially prone to osteosarcoma, or bone cancer. The symptoms are lameness and leg pain in a middle-aged or older dog. Early detection is critical! Call right away if you notice that your dog is limping.

### *Dental Disease*

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. It starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean. It's also important to prevent broken or damaged teeth by avoiding certain kinds of toys and treats, including chew hooves, tennis balls, bones, and ice cubes.

### *Heart Disease*

Great Danes are especially prone to a kind of deadly heart problem known as dilated cardiomyopathy, or DCM, in which the heart becomes so large, thin, and weak that it can no longer effectively pump blood to the body. Watch for your friend acting weak or tired, fainting or collapsing, breathing in a labored way, or coughing. We'll conduct an annual ECG screening after age one to look for abnormal heart rhythms. We'll treat this condition with medication and may also recommend a dietary supplement called taurine.

### *Hip Dysplasia*

You've probably heard of hip dysplasia, an inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis. Unfortunately, it is common in great Danes. You may notice that he has lameness in his hind legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to avoid discomfort and pain. Surgery is sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases of hip dysplasia. We'll take X-rays of your dog's joints to identify the disease as early as possible. Keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis two years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering. Good nutrition and proper exercise are also very important to help reduce bone and joint problems as a pet gets older.

### *Infections*

Danes are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as parvovirus, rabies, and distemper. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we'll administer to your dog based on the diseases we see in our area, her age, and other factors.

### *Joint Disease*

When great Dane puppies are allowed to grow too quickly, the cartilage in their joints may not attach to the bone properly. Surgery may be required to fix the problem, known as osteochondritis desiccans or OCD, so it's best to stick to our recommended growth rate of no more than four pounds per week. Don't overfeed him, weigh your puppy every three to four weeks, don't feed calcium supplements, and feed a large-breed puppy diet rather than an adult diet or a regular puppy diet.



### *Neurological Disease*

A genetically linked neurological condition that could occur in your great Dane causes a wobbly, drunken gait. This condition, known as wobbler disease or wobbler syndrome, happens because there is a narrowing of the vertebrae in the neck, which pinches the spinal cord and associated nerves. If the nerves don't send signals to the brain the way they're supposed to, your dog can't feel her feet. The first signs you'll notice are unstable hind legs, stumbling, and sometimes falling. Medications, neck braces, rehabilitation exercise programs, and surgery are treatment options.

### *Obesity*

Obesity is a significant health problem in dogs and a serious disease that may cause arthritis, some types of cancer, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when he looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can love him to death with human food and treats.

### *Parasites*

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your dog's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas to ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in any number of ways: drinking unclean water, eating or stepping on feces, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventative medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

### *Skin Infections*

Your great Dane is prone to a form of skin infection called lip-fold pyoderma, which occurs because the folds of skin along the lower jaw are usually moist. Bacteria can readily gain a foothold and cause a reddened, smelly area that is uncomfortable for your dog. Another painful condition that your Dane is susceptible to is pododermatitis, or skin infection of the feet. It causes blisters and ulcers between his toes that he may lick, or they may make him limp. Ouch! We will check for these conditions upon examination, but let us know if you see signs. We'll recommend treatment with ointments, antibiotics, and other therapy as necessary.

### *Spaying or Neutering*

One of the best things you can do for your great Dane is to have her spayed (called neutering in males). In males, this means we surgically remove the testicles, and in females, it means we surgically remove the uterus and ovaries. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to evaluate and possibly address some of the diseases your Dane is likely to develop. This is convenient for you and easy for your friend. Don't worry; we'll let you know what specific problems we'll look for when the time arrives.

### *Thyroid Problems*

Danes are prone to a condition called hypothyroidism in which the body doesn't make enough thyroid hormone. Signs can include dry skin and coat, hair loss, susceptibility to other skin diseases, weight gain, lethargy, mental dullness, sleeping excessively, fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes. We'll conduct a blood screening test annually starting at age two. Treatment is usually simple: replacement hormones given in the form of a pill.

## Taking Care of Your Great Dane at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch his diet, make sure he gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush his teeth, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see “What to Watch For” below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for him. This is when we’ll give him the necessary “check-ups” and test for diseases and conditions that are common in great Danes. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures he will need throughout his life, and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

### *Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise*

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Dane live longer, stay healthy, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine. Overweight great Danes are more prone to cancer, heart disease, arthritis, and other problems.

- ✓ Brush her teeth at least three times a week.
- ✓ Don’t let your dog chew on bones, ice cubes, hooves, or tennis balls.
- ✓ Keep your dog’s diet consistent, and don’t give her people food.
- ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
- ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, and don’t overdo exercise.

### *What to Watch For*

Give us a call immediately if you notice any of these signs in your great Dane:

- ✓ Vomiting or chronic diarrhea
- ✓ Weight loss or weight gain
- ✓ Lumps, bumps, and moles
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Limping or lameness—this could indicate hip dysplasia or bone cancer
- ✓ Hair loss
- ✓ Coughing or difficulty breathing
- ✓ Episodes of weakness
- ✓ Pot-belly appearance
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching or licking)
- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, or discharge in the ear
- ✓ A foul odor or redness about mouth
- ✓ Sores or blisters between her toes
- ✓ Wobbly legs, stumbling, or falling

## Partners in Health Care

DNA testing is a rapidly advancing field with tests being developed to help diagnose conditions before they become problems for your friend. For the most up-to-date information on DNA and other screening tests available for your pal, visit [www.Genesis4Pets.com](http://www.Genesis4Pets.com).

Your great Dane counts on you to take good care of him, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that he lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to ensure that your pal has the best health care possible: health care that's based on his breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns.

## Health Evaluation Schedule for Great Danes

Now that you’ve read about the health issues we’ll be monitoring, we wanted to give you an at-a-glance summary of what services we’ll provide to keep your great Dane happy and healthy. It may seem like your pet is prone to quite a few problems, but don’t worry; we’ll take the lead in keeping her healthy for a lifetime. We’ll review these health-care steps with you in more detail, but please feel free to ask questions or voice concerns at any time.

*Studies to determine the frequency of inheritance or disease in this breed either have not been completed or are inconclusive. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we’ve described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed.*



# How We'll Keep Your Great Dane Healthy

*Puppy to Adolescent:  
Infant to 17 in People Years*

*Adult: 18 to 39 in  
People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59  
in People Years*

*Senior: 40 to 59  
in People Years*

	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Great Dane-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	<input type="radio"/>	6-8 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Internal parasite test and/or deworming Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Heart murmurs Hernias Proper dental alignment Parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	10-12 weeks	Brief physical examination Heartworm prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth at home	Proper growth rate Behavioral problems Parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	14-16 weeks	Brief physical examination Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss obedience training, nail trimming, and grooming Schedule spay/neuter surgery	Adult teeth coming in properly Skin infections Tonsillitis Parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	4-6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Presurgical diagnostics for spay or neuter surgery Stomach tuck Hip evaluation	Joint disease Skin infections Internal organ health prior to spay/neuter surgery Prevention of bloat Hip dysplasia
	<input type="radio"/>	1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip evaluation Heartworm test Internal parasite check Vaccinations Discuss diet, weight, and exercise	Joint disease Skin infections Excessive weight gain Behavioral problems Hip dysplasia Heartworms and other parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	2 years through 5 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip evaluation Internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Thyroid testing Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Skin infections Healthy weight Hip dysplasia Internal organ health and function Signs of cancer Thyroid function Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	6 years through 7 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Hip evaluation Senior internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Thyroid testing Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Skin infections Healthy weight Arthritis Hip dysplasia Internal organ health and function Signs of cancer Thyroid function Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites
	<input type="radio"/>	8 years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Golden years internal organ health evaluation Cancer screen Thyroid testing Glaucoma screen Heart health check Internal parasite check Heartworm test Vaccinations	Dental disease Skin infections Healthy weight Arthritis Internal organ health and function Signs of cancer Thyroid function Glaucoma Heart disease Heartworms and other parasites

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.