

Exercise for your Newfoundland Puppy



There is nothing more exciting than bringing your new baby Newfoundland puppy to his forever home. Most puppies are lively, active little bundles of fur, who are always on the go and looking for something to do-in between prolonged periods of rest and deep sleep! Due to this, many owners of a new puppy think that it is not possible to provide too much exercise, or that it is ok to exercise the pup up until the point that they tire out and no longer want to run around and play. **Now please have a close look at the X rays** in this article because you may be harming your puppy without realising it.

When you get your 8/10 week old puppy, please keep these images in mind. **Their bones do not even touch yet.** They plod around so cutely with big floppy paws and wobbly movement because their joints are entirely made up of muscle, tendons, ligaments with skin covering. Nothing is fitting tightly together or has a true socket yet.

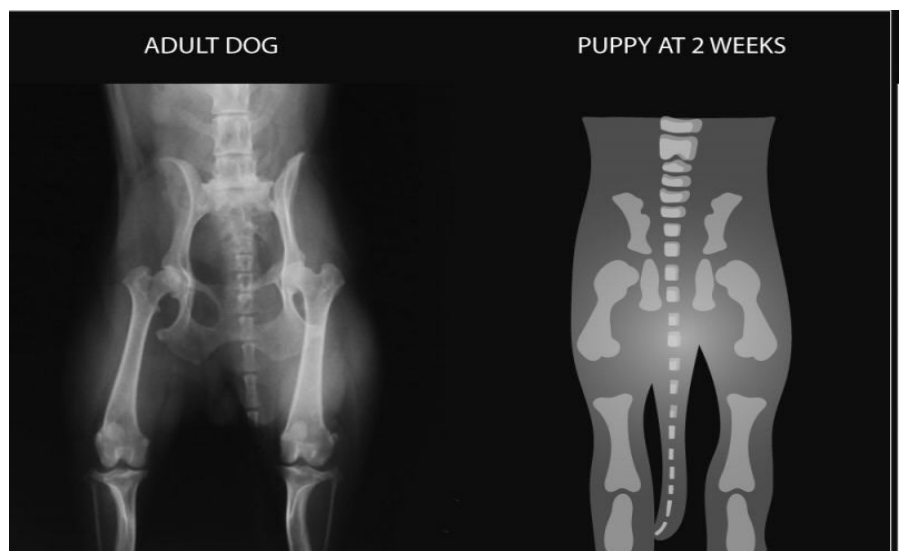
When you run them excessively or don't restrict their exercise to stop them from overdoing it during this period you don't give them a chance to grow properly. Every big jump or excited bouncing run causes impacts between the bones. In reasonable amounts this is not problematic and is the normal wear and tear that every animal will engage in.

But when you're letting puppy jump up and down off the lounge or bed, take them for long walks you are damaging that forming joint. You only get the chance to grow them once. A well built body is something that comes from excellent breeding and a great upbringing-BOTH, not just one. Once grown you will have the rest of their life to spend playing and engaging in higher impact exercise.

So keep it calm while they're still little baby puppies and give the gift that can only be given once.

So why is this ? you may sensibly ask.

It is all about GROWTH Plates.



In order to be able to work out how much exercise your puppy needs and to ensure that the growth plates develop properly and normally, it is first important to know what the growth plates are, what they do, and how they develop.

What are the growth plates?

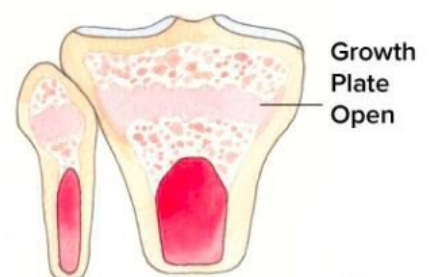
The growth plates in the dog are the areas of cartilage that develop at the end of the long bones of the legs, which over time, calcify (harden) and develop into denser bone as the puppy gets older and works their muscles more.

Puppy bones are surrounded by layers of soft developing cartilage tissue that are found towards the end of most long bones. These areas of soft cartilage are known as growth plates or more technically, *epiphyseal plates*. When it comes to the skeletal development of puppies, it's important that the puppies' bones go through slow even growth, basically, synchronized growth that occurs evenly and as close to the same rate as possible.

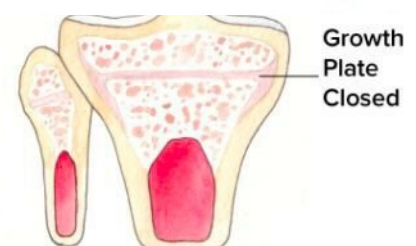
So as your puppy gets older, their exercise should match their development and increase slowly as they grow, alongside of the hardening process of the growth plates themselves. Before the growth plates fully develop and mature into harder bone matter, they can be very vulnerable to injury from too much exercise and hard impacts, as they are the final part of the long bones to harden off.

If an injury to a growth plate occurs, the growth of damaged cells may slow down and come to a halt meaning that there may no longer be growth on one side. When the growing of the affected side is delayed and stopped, the unaffected, healthy side may continue to grow and this unevenness may lead to deformity.

The most common area for a problem with the growth plates to develop is between the ulna and radial bones, in the forearm area of the leg. If the growth plate in this area is damaged and stops growing, the opposite bone will continue to develop normally, leading to bow legs and an awkward moving gait that the puppy will retain for life. This can then, over time, lead to uneven pressure on the other legs, and cause a range of secondary problems for the dog down the line.



PUPPY



ADULT DOG

How much exercise do puppies need?

The question of how much exercise puppies need and should receive is a challenging one to answer, as the goalposts are always moving due to the puppy's changing age and growth! It also depends on the type of exercise that your pup receives; walks on the lead are low-impact, and can be carried out more often than high-impact, vigorous play such as running and jumping, which should be monitored carefully to avoid causing damage to the developing limbs.

Pups go through their largest, fastest period of physical growth and development between the ages of four and eight months, and this is when the growth plates are also working their hardest to harden off. After around eight months of age, the growth plates should be fully or almost fully fused, and the largest window of risk of damage will have closed.

However, for some giant dog breeds that grow and develop at a much slower rate, it can take eighteen months to two years for growth to complete and the growth plates to have fully developed.

A good rule of thumb is provided by The Kennel Club, which suggests that for every month of the pup's age, they should receive five minutes of exercise, repeated twice daily. So once your pup is six months old, they should be getting half an hour of gentle exercise, twice per day. Understandably, you should take into account your dog's own development when working out what is best for them, and not push them past the point of tiredness or reluctance to play.

Also bear in mind that a half hour sedate walk is rather different to a half hour of vigorous jumping about and lots of running around, and moderate this accordingly. Always talk to the breeder and your vet for advice if you have concerns.

