

Preparing Your Pet for an At-Home Vet Visit



At-home visits from veterinary professionals are a wonderful option for most pets, allowing them to receive care in the comfort of their own home and avoid the stressors of car travel and the vet clinic. However, pets can still experience fear, anxiety, and stress (FAS) within the home when unfamiliar people show up to provide vet care. Here are some tips to help prepare your pet for a Fear Free® at-home visit.

Have previous medical records ready. Once you've scheduled your visit, request that prior records be sent to both you and your at-home provider. Without medical history, providers will have an incomplete picture of your pet's physical and emotional health. If medical records are received after the provider has already seen your pet, a second follow-up visit could be determined necessary.

Communicate your pet's likes and dislikes. Every pet will have their own sensitivities with how and where they prefer to be handled. Alert the vet team to your pet's preferences ahead of time, especially if there are any areas of pain or discomfort. If your pet has a historical fear of vet visits or gets stressed when guests come to the house, communicate this as well so your providers can plan ahead. The Fear Free At-Home Pre-Visit Questionnaire is a perfect way to communicate this information ahead of the visit.

Leave extra time. Due to the nature of at-home practice, the vet team may arrive later than scheduled, or be ready to arrive earlier than planned. Setting up the visit on a day when you have some flexibility will give your Fear Free provider time to bond with your pet and help them relax.

Stock the pantry. Treats can contribute to a positive emotional state and help distract during veterinary care, so have some of your pet's favorite snacks on hand for the visit. Even pets on prescription diets can often have their own special treats, such as the canned version of their dry food.

Consider calming medications and supplements.

Even though your pet won't be going to a vet clinic, at-home visits are still vet visits, and some pets can get stressed when they're examined and handled even at home. If your pet has been prescribed calming supplements, anxiolytics, or pain medications, giving these in advance will ensure that your pet is as comfortable as possible for their appointment.

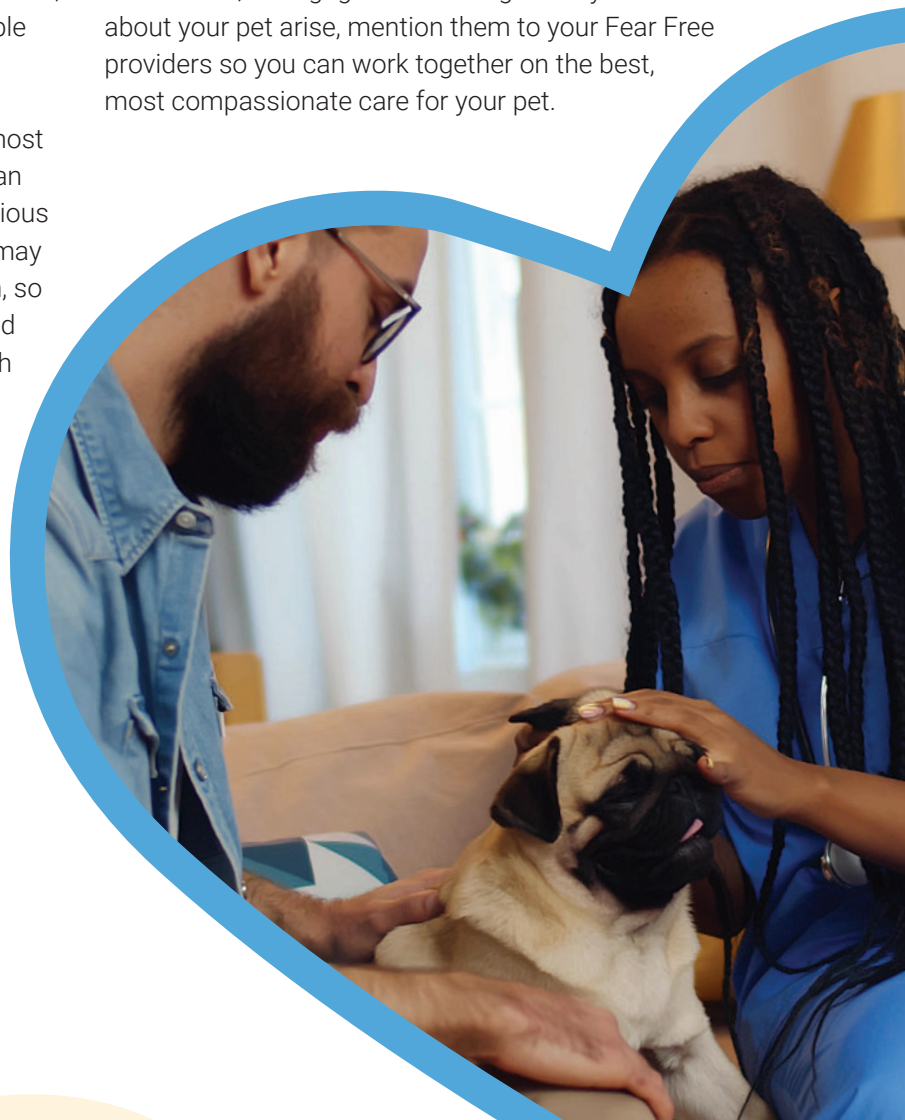




Set the stage. The visit should occur in a quiet area that's well-lit and cozy. Soft classical music, pheromone diffusers, a cushy pet bed, and a non-slip surface can help induce calm and relaxation and reduce stress. For felines, pick a spot where your cat will still be easily accessible if they choose to hide. If your cat goes under the bed or behind furniture, pulling them out will significantly increase their FAS. It also helps to have the person most bonded with your pet available for the visit so they can be a soothing presence. Young children or rambunctious pets crowding around the vet team while they work may increase the patient's stress and be a safety concern, so be prepared to distract children with fun activities and consider confining other pets in a separate room with a long-lasting food puzzle.

Anticipate arrival. Dogs may bark and go into high alert when there's a visitor at the front door, and some cats will hide. Be on the lookout for new messages from the vet team so you can be ready to greet them before they knock or ring the doorbell. If you know that your dog is more reactive when the bell rings, discuss this in advance with the at-home care team so you can decide on the best way for them to alert you to their arrival.

Ensure you are calm. Pet parents often feel anxiety themselves during a vet visit, which can inadvertently be transmitted to the pet. Try a short relaxation exercise beforehand, or engage in a calming activity. If worries about your pet arise, mention them to your Fear Free providers so you can work together on the best, most compassionate care for your pet.



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