



Survival Tips for the Doggy 'Teenage' Years

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Did you know that our wonderful canine companions transition through a teenage phase just like people do?

Well, luckily for us (and them!), the doggy variety is much shorter than ours!

Humans transition into teenage hood from approximately 10 years of age (known as tween or pre-teens). They become teenagers from 13-18 years before reaching complete mental maturity at approximately 25 years of age, when the pre-frontal cortex responsible for impulses and decisions is fully formed.

Dogs will experience a similar transition, albeit over a much shorter time frame.



At 4-6 months your puppy will transition from puppy to teen and will remain so until 12-months of age. Over the following 6-month period, your dog's brain will continue to develop despite physically being an adult. As with people, your dog's pre-frontal cortex is responsible for impulses and decision making. Large and giant breed dogs will likely not reach mental maturity until 2 to 2 ½ years of age.

While your dog is in the teenage stage of their lifespan, you will inevitably experience new challenges. Remember, your dog is unique, and will experience adolescence in their own special ways!



What is normal for adolescent dogs?

1. Higher energy levels
2. Greater need to observe, smell and listen to their environment
3. Social regression or social progression
4. New or re-visited behaviours
5. Strong need for consistency and routine
6. Increased insecurities
7. For dogs not desexed by 9-10 months we can sometimes start to see some of the following behaviours:
 - increased interest in other dogs or from other dogs (which can sometimes cause anxiety or aggression)
 - increased marking (leaving small amounts of urine in multiple places as communication to other dogs)
 - increased desire to leave your property
 - excessive vocalisation if contained to one area





How should I best manage my dog during this period?

1. **Aim for 2 walks each day** - Regardless of size or breed, even if you have a backyard and/or offer lots of vigorous play
2. **Mental exercise** - Different walking routes, different places, food dispensing toys, search games
3. **Consistency** - Keep walking, feeding and play times consistent (only vary up to 30 minutes). Keep the order of routines consistent e.g. walk and then meal, always in that order.
4. **Observe body language** - Ensure their confident and social nature is maintained. If your dog freezes, cowers, hides, runs, or reacts with growling, barking towards anything, turn away from what is scary and encourage your dog to follow with light, happy movements. Utilise treats and toys.
5. **Desexing timing** - Discuss current desexing timing recommendations with your veterinarian. For further information, refer to our website article: <https://www.turramurravet.com.au/vet-articles/desexing-your-pet/>.
6. **Continued training and positive socialization**

Our **Canine Kindergarten** classes (see <https://www.turramurravet.com.au/puppy-training/canine-kindergarten/>) are a great way to provide continued socialisation and training for your 4 to 12-month-old adolescent dog. We can also arrange private sessions for more personalised guidance during this time. Contact us today on 9988 0198 today to discuss your training options further. We look forward to helping you tackle those behaviour challenges typical in the 'teenage' doggy years.

