**Holistic Veterinary Care \* 612-275-2904 \*** [**www.holistic-vet-care.com**](http://www.holistic-vet-care.com)

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**Basic Supplements for Dogs and Cats**

**Essential Fatty Acids**: These fatty acids form part of every cell membrane in our bodies, and are therefore necessary for cellular repair. They also reduce inflammation and promote healing. Some specific fatty acids are called “essential” because our bodies cannot make them, and we have to get them in our diets. Dogs and cats would naturally get essential fatty acids from eating their prey of raw dead animals. Unfortunately, you can’t buy beef oil or chicken oil, so we are left with fish oil.

There are many types of fish oil available. You can use tuna oil, krill oil, sardine oil, anchovy oil, salmon oil, or cod liver oil. The main concern with these products is the contamination of our oceans by environmental pollution and heavy metals. Tuna and salmon are large fish that consume other fish, so they tend to accumulate toxins. When you choose a fish oil, there should be an indication on the label that quality and purity testing were performed. Standard Process, Nordic Naturals, Blue Ice, and Carlson’s are high-quality brands.

The dose of essential fatty acids will be on the label for animal-specific products. If using a human product, smaller dogs might get 500-1000mg per day, and larger dogs might get 1000-2000mg. These doses can be doubled if arthritis or any other inflammatory condition is present. In cases of illness or arthritis, give fish oils daily. For maintenance, give them 2-3 times per week. Not all brands are palatable to all pets, so it is possible to have a fish oil that is too fishy for your pet. If they just won’t eat it, try a different brand.

**Probiotics**: These are the healthy bacteria that we need to eat on a regular basis in order to repopulate our intestinal flora. These bacteria break down some of the food we eat to release the nutrients, and support our immune system by keeping the “bad” bacteria and yeast in low numbers so that they can’t cause disease.

The importance of a healthy intestine cannot be overstated. The bulk of our immune system is found lining the walls of our large intestine. In order to have a strong immune system, we have to have a healthy gut. Good probiotic supplements contain several strains of bacteria, with billions of bacteria per dose. The best products made for pets are HerbSmith MicroFlora Plus and Animal Essentials Plant Enzymes and Probiotics.

If the intestinal lining is unstable, then a product like Standard Process Canine Enteric Support is necessary to rebuild the intestinal lining so that the bacteria can adhere and restore normal gut flora. Some pets require more than one probiotic if their systems are seriously depleted.

**Digestive Enzymes**: Digestive enzymes are naturally present in raw, fresh foods. However, even if we feed a raw food diet, the meat and vegetables have usually been refrigerated or frozen. Any storage will cause a loss of enzymatic activity in the food. This is also how fruit and vegetables are grown for long distance sales (like fruit grown in California and sold in Minnesota). They are bred to contain fewer enzymes so that they don’t rot as quickly.

When we buy processed foods (dry or canned), these foods are sterile (no bacteria or enzymes) and contain preservatives in order for the food to have a shelf life. This is why, when you buy that bag of dry food, it has a “best by” date on it that is a year away. When we feed our pets these foods, their pancreases have to produce all the enzymes that would be required to digest the food. This overburdens the pancreas and is a major cause of pancreatitis in dogs and vomiting (subclinical pancreatitis) in cats.

Digestive enzymes can be found in pet food stores (Prozyme, NZymes Bac Pak Plus, Solid Gold D-Zyme) and health food stores (Standard Process Multizyme, Udo’s Essentials Flora Adult Enzymes, Solaray Pancreatin 1300). Dosages are on the label for animal-specific products, and can be safely doubled if needed. If using a human product, just give one capsule daily with food or use as directed by your veterinarian.

**Whole Food Supplements**: These supplements provide vitamins and minerals from food sources. Most multivitamins contain synthetic vitamins and minerals in non-absorbable forms. For example, most Vitamin C supplements contain ascorbic acid or sodium ascorbate. Ascorbic acid is the outer shell of the Vitamin C complex. The entire complex is necessary for your body to absorb and utilize the Vitamin C. Where will your body get the rest of the complex? It will scrounge around for the missing bits and pieces, and you will urinate out the bulk of the Vitamin C supplement if you don’t have enough spare parts on hand to make up the entire complex. Eating an orange will provide the complete Vitamin C complex. Many supplements have 1000mg or more of Vitamin C, whereas an orange has only 50mg. You can absorb all the Vitamin C in the orange, but you will pee out most of the synthetic supplement.

Minerals present in pet foods and supplements are often sourced directly from mines. This is a problem, because minerals in their natural state (a.k.a. rocks) cannot be absorbed by the body. We depend on plants to draw the minerals up out of the soil and transform them into a state that we can absorb and utilize.

Whole food supplements should list food items and plants as their ingredients. Some options for these products include Springtime Fresh Factors and Longevity, Udo’s Pet Essentials, Dr. Harvey’s E-Mune Boost, Hilton Herbs Puriphy, Standard Process Canine Whole Body Support, and Azmira Daily Boost. You can also feed herbs, kelp, alfalfa, wheatgrass powder, and spirulina as long as they are organic. Vary these supplements as well so you don’t accidentally overdose your pet on any single vitamin or mineral. When you finish a bottle of one, use something different the next time.