10 Painful Reasons NOT to Spay or Neuter a Dog Until After Puberty

It’s long been a source of contention among veterinary professionals when a dog should be spayed or neutere

[*After all, daily euthasiasion of hundreds of dogs is not something any shelter*](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace) [*should go through*](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/what-do-vet-techs-do/)*.*

**This, however, ended up being the standard response instead of a limited time solution to a problem.**

If you have a puppy and you aren’t sure when it’s the best time to fix your dog, consider some of the following information before you discuss it with your veterinarian. But at least wait a year or two or three!

Below we listed 10 reasons why your pet would be healthier if left intact.

1. Hip Dysplasia

The wheel cart takes the pain and strain away from walking: [source](http://eddieswheels.com/dog-wheelchairs-for-dogs-with-hip-dysplasia-and-arthritis/)

The prestigious Cornell University College of Veterinary Medicine [published a study](http://avmajournals.avma.org/doi/abs/10.2460/javma.2004.224.380) in the Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association that hypothesized dogs spayed at an early age were more likely to develop hip dysplasia.

This may be due to the premature removal of estrogen-producing organs in the body, leading to hip joints that develop abnormally because they’re missing estrogen.

It’s important to remember that hip dysplasia is mostly genetic, meaning it’s passed down from a puppy’s parents. **But the more you can reduce the chances of your dog getting it the better (this includes** [**a proper**](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/best-natural-dog-food-brands/) **food diet).**

If you’re purchasing a purebred dog like a labrador or a German sheperd, it’s critical to choose a puppy from parents who have been certified by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals to ensure there isn’t a genetic history of hip dysplasia.

2. Heart Tumors

A heart base mass: [source](http://sites.tufts.edu/progressnotes/2014/01/clinical-case-challenge-14/).

During an analysis of medical data that was recorded [from 1982 to 1995](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10225598), it was found that cardiac tumors were found more often in spayed females versus intact females. The most common type of cardiac tumor, hemangiosarcoma (HAS), was found five times more in spayed females, while neutered male dogs had a slightly higher risk than their intact counterparts.

*The study came to the conclusion that 12 breeds had a higher than average risk of growing a heart tumor, while 17 other breeds had a lower risk.*

The research hasn’t been in-depth enough to state how delaying a spay/neuter will decrease these risks, and there hasn’t been enough research done to see if there were any other common factors leading to these tumors.

What’s important to note is there isn’t concrete proof that fixing your dog will give them a heart tumor, but delaying the spay or neuter surgery until they’re one might decrease the chances if they’re at a higher risk because of their breed or genetics.

Cardiac tumors are exceedingly rare in dogs, and you’re far more likely to see complications due to intact reproductive organs than you are a tumor of the heart.

3. Abnormalities in Bone Growth & Development

Osteochondrodysplasia: [source](http://www.vetnext.com/search.php?s=aandoening&id=73056256955%20191).

Experienced breeders of large breed dogs and vets who take care of larger dogs have noticed that dogs fixed before their first birthday grew much larger than dogs who remained intact until after they reached puberty.

**Multiple studies performed in the 1990s corroborated this, saying that the earlier a dog was fixed, the taller they’d wind up.**

In 2000, [a research study](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/11202221) published in the Journal of Pediatric Endocrinology and Metabolism came up with a hypothesis as to why this happens.

When puberty approaches, estrogen is responsible for healthy maturation of the skeleton and the gradual closing of the epiphyseal growth plate, the spaces between the bones that allow the bones room to reach their full length.

It’s possible that removing estrogen (i.e. the ovaries or testicles) in puppies will keep the growth plates open longer than is natural. This allows more room for the bones to grow larger than they’re meant to, causing body proportions that can be unhealthy for the dog’s frame.

For example, the femur, the thickest bone in the hind legs, has a natural stopping point at eight months of age. But when the dog is fixed at the typical six months of age, the tibia, which should stop growing at about a year of age, will continue to grow, causing an unnatural angle at the knee.

This can put more stress on the cruciate ligaments, leading to an increased risk of a torn knee ligaments.

While some people might think this is good (*large breed dogs should be big, right?*), growing too quickly can lead to a slew of bone abnormalities that range from mild to deadly.

4. Higher Risk of ACL Ruptures

Knee brace after surgery: [source](http://www.mypetsbrace.com/blog/to-brace-or-not-to-brace-that-is-the-stifle-question/)

Anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) ruptures are a common ailment in active dogs and small dogs with bad knees. These ruptures require a costly orthopedic surgery and months of rehab, and when one knee goes out, it’s pretty likely that the other knee is likely to follow down the road.

While genetics play a big part (*always pay careful attention to who you’re buying a purebred puppy from*), it’s now being thought that early spays and neuters have a role.

A study [at Texas Tech University](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/15577502) Health Sciences Center showed that fixed dogs had a higher rate of ligament ruptures.

This could be due to the previously mentioned bone growth issues that place stress on the ligaments, or it could be because the majority of the canine population has been altered.

If you’re unsure what you should do for your large breed dog, find a veterinarian [who’s experienced](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/what-do-vet-techs-do/) in your dog’s breed and consult with them.

5. Hypothyroidism

Golden retriever with hypothyroidism: [source](http://www.endocrinevet.info/2012/08/managing-hypothyroid-dogs-with-low-t4.html)

Early spaying/neutering has been shown to increase the incidences [of hypothryoidism](http://www.grca.org/health/bigfour_hypo.html) in Golden retrievers.

[Hypothyroid can lead to a host of health problems, including:](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

* [Obesity](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)
* [Hair loss](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)
* [Dry skin](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)
* [High blood cholesterol](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[In severe, untreated cases of hypothyroid, some dogs can develop a life-threatening heart condition.](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

**[Dogs with hypothyroid need to have bloodwork drawn at regular intervals to monitor their thryoid levels and take a daily dose of medication.](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)**

[6. Infectious Diseases](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[Help prevent these diseases in your dog.](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank)

[Texas A&M’s College](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/embrace) [of Veterinary Medicine](http://vetmed.tamu.edu/research) did a study of 269 shelter dogs to see how the rate of disease correlated with their spay or neuter surgery.

They divided the dogs into two groups and fixed one group before they hit 24 weeks, while the second half was fixed after 24 weeks of age. The owners were contacted to see if there was a change in behavior or if they developed any physical problems after the surgery.

No owners reported any behavioral changes, and all of the owners kept their adopted dogs.

**However, the rate of infectious diseases was higher in the dogs that were fixed prior to 24 weeks.**

7. Adverse Reactions to Vaccines

Keep vaccines effective, they are damaging enough.

There’s absolutely no reason not to [vaccinate your dog](http://veterinarytechnicianguide.com/puppy-shots-cost-vaccination-schedule/) for infectious diseases unless there’s an autoimmune disorder, but the [American Kennel Club’s Canine Health Foundation](http://www.akcchf.org/) released a report with the idea that early alteration might contribute to a higher incidence of adverse vaccine reactions.

There hasn’t currently been any official studies done on this theory, so regardless of your dog’s reproductive status, they need to be vaccinated on time to protect them from these deadly diseases.

If you’re worried about a vaccine reaction, understand that these are quite rare and are usually mild.

8. Secondary Anesthetic Procedures for Toy Breeds

Do you really want to put this toy pup under anesthesia more than is required?

[Toy breeds](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Toy_dog) are notorious for retaining their deciduous (baby) teeth long past the normal six months. Their molars usually fall out on a normal timeline, but it’s not uncommon for them to retain their puppy canines or incisors long past six months or even past a year.

If you don’t want to put your dog under anesthesia more than necessary, you should definitely wait until after six months–preferably a year–to knock out two birds with one stone.

9. Bone Cancer

Bone cancer X-Ray in : [source](http://www.managingpetpain.com/Aspen%27s%20Page.html)

In 2002, there was a study performed with Rottweilers where a link was established between the development of bone sarcomas and the age when they were fixed.

Dogs of both sexes that were fixed before they turned one year old were more likely to develop bone cancer later in life.

**The fixed Rottweilers had the highest risk of bone cancer.**

Data collected from the [Veterinary Medical Database](https://vmdb.org/) from 1980 to 1994 showed that the risk for bone cancer in large breed purebreeds doubled in dogs that were fixed.

*If you have a large breed dog, you should absolutely discuss the risks of bone cancer with your vet before you take spaying or neutering completely off the table.*

10. Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer x-ray.

It’s been long studied that neutering male dogs greatly reduces their chances of developing prostate problems, especially prostate cancer.

A study done by Michigan State University [on 43 dogs](http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/3506104) showed there wasn’t any proof that neutering would prevent the dog from developing prostate cancer.

Researchers did say that prostate cancer may not be completely tied to the production of hormones released by the testicles as it was previously thought.

Because this is such a small study–tiny in the grand scheme of the medical field–it might not be the main reason you decide not to neuter your male dog until later, but it’s one more reason why its still the best course of action to wait a year before you neuter him.