

# FAQs About Dogs Using Wheelchairs or Carts

Carts for dogs with mobility issues allow people to enjoy many years with their beloved pets.

## What is a dog wheelchair or cart?

It's a device that provides support for walking, to assist dogs who have mobility issues. With canine carts, these dogs can play, run and get the exercise they need.

## What type of mobility issues are aided by dog carts?

Dog carts can help dogs with hip dysplasia, paralysis, arthritis, soreness, neurological issues, surgery recovery, spinal problems, amputations, and general weakness in the limbs.

## Who determines whether a dog needs a cart?

You should work with a veterinarian to determine whether a cart would be beneficial to your dog. In some cases, a vet may advise against using a cart so that the dog can build muscle and gain strength on his own.

## Are there different types of carts and support tools?

They come in various shapes and styles to help with particular disabilities:

- Two-wheeled carts can be helpful for dogs with rear limb weakness or for post-surgery rehabilitation.
- Two-wheeled carts with extra support have a front extension that gives support to the front limbs.
- Some dog carts provide support for all four limbs. These are used when dogs are unable to walk with their front legs and must be supported in both the front and rear.
- Different wheel types are used on the carts, depending on the terrain or soil type where it will be used.
- Hand-held lifting devices, designed for pets with rear limb weakness, are used to help lift a dog up stairs, into the car or through doorways.
- Walking aids, such as fabric harnesses and slings, can help to support a dog's hindquarters.

## How long will it take for my dog to become accustomed to the cart?

Most dogs relish the freedom that a cart provides, so it usually takes only a few days for a dog to adjust. In some cases, it takes a bit longer, and some training may be necessary to help your dog adjust. Because of age or personality, a small percentage of dogs will reject a cart.

## Should I leave my dog unattended in the cart?

Your dog should never be left unattended while in the cart. There's a chance that the cart may become stuck or tip over.

## Will my dog be able to urinate and defecate while in the cart?

Yes, carts are designed to allow your dog to do both.

## Will my dog be able to lie down while in the cart?

Smaller, short-legged dogs may be able to lie down; larger dogs cannot.

## Can a dog go up or down stairs while in the cart?

If your dog has hind leg issues, you can help your dog go up or down a short flight of stairs by lifting the bar in the back of the cart and letting your dog use his or her front legs to take the steps.

## How long should my dog be left in the cart?

Carts are not meant to be used for long periods of time or without supervision. If a dog has been given enough exercise while outside in the cart, he is usually ready to get out of the cart and relax when he comes inside.

## Will special arrangements be needed for daytime care, when I'm not home?

It depends on the needs of your particular dog. Most dogs, healthy or disabled, are content to sleep during the day if their people are gone. Walking and play time usually occur at the beginning and end of the workday, and dogs adjust to that schedule.

Daytime care may be necessary if your dog needs to be taken out to relieve himself during the day or if your dog is incontinent. If doggie diapers are used, they should be changed regularly, so arrangements will need to be made for that to happen.

## How beneficial is exercise for a disabled dog?

Exercise is important to keep your dog in good physical condition. It's also important to keep the dog's weight down. The working limbs must remain strong and healthy.

Dogs who begin to show behavior such as excessive barking, whining or restlessness during the night usually do so out of boredom and lack of exercise. These behaviors typically diminish when the dog is regularly exercised with the aid of the cart. Also, exercise can help stimulate sluggish bowels to keep the pet more "on schedule."

## If a dog has some use of his rear legs, will using a cart discourage him from exercising those legs?

Pets who have limited use of their rear legs benefit by using a wheelchair, because it enables them to exercise more intensely and for a longer duration of time.

## Can a dog in a cart play with other dogs and family pets?

Because it's something new, other pets may be fearful or startled at first by the sight of a dog in a wheelchair. Familiarize other pets with the cart in the same way that you would ordinarily introduce new pets. Keep all the animals safe by supervising the introductions and observing their body language carefully for signs of discomfort or stress. Once the other dogs are comfortable around the dog in the cart, they can enjoy supervised interaction.