

5 Small Dog Myths That Deserve Busting

Do you believe these myths about small dogs? Not only do they miss the mark in many cases, they can also be harmful to your pet. Whether you own a small dog or not, these are five myths that deserve to be exposed.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- There's lots of information floating around about the temperament and personality of small dogs. Much of it misses the mark
- While small dogs offer benefits like easier handling and lower food costs, many breeds require significant grooming and dental care
- A common myth is that small dogs don't need vigorous exercise. Another is that all small dogs are lap dogs
- The "yappy small dog" stereotype varies by breed — Chihuahuas tend to bark frequently while Cavalier King Charles Spaniels are typically quieter, with owners often unintentionally reinforcing barking behavior
- Many people believe small dogs need to be pampered, when what they really need is to be protected and kept safe from harm

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Small Dogs Are Easier to Care for Than Big Dogs



Not so fast! While it's easier to pick up a small dog and cart him around, and pet food bills for a small dog won't break the bank, the little guys often come with their own set of baggage. Many small dogs — think Yorkshire Terrier or Maltese — have significant grooming requirements.

Their teeth also tend to get dirtier quicker due to crowding and congenital enamel defects, requiring daily brushing, regardless of the diet she's eating and bones she's gnawing on. And some little dogs also seem to be more difficult to house train than bigger breeds.

Small Dogs Get All the Exercise They Need Running Around the House



Wrong! Even if your small dog isn't athletic or even particularly energetic, she still needs regular physical exercise to maintain her muscles and joints. Running back and forth from the living room to the kitchen in search of snacks or a toy doesn't count. Exercise is not only necessary to maintain your dog physically, but also mentally and emotionally. Like larger breeds, small dogs need to burn off energy to prevent boredom and behavior problems.

Small Dogs Are Yappy



Some are; some aren't. For example, Chihuahuas tend to be barkers, but Cavalier King Charles Spaniels and Italian Greyhounds are generally known to be quiet pets. It's also important to remember that often the owners of small dogs create or exacerbate barking behavior by inadvertently reinforcing it.

Small Dogs Are Lap Dogs



Again, some are and some aren't. And often lap-sitting behavior is situational. For example, a small shivery dog might sit in your lap just until he warms up. A little fellow with a protective or territorial bent will quickly land in your lap if another pet approaches you.

Small Dogs Need Babying



They really don't, but their owners tend to think they do. They don't necessarily need to be fussed over ... but they do need protecting. Small dogs, especially really tiny breeds, are more vulnerable in many situations than their larger counterparts. Your 5-pound Yorkie is easy prey for a coyote wandering the neighborhood. She's also more likely to be stepped on in your kitchen than a larger dog.

Sources and References

VetStreet, December 11, 2014.
