

# Your Cairn Terrier

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



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Your Cairn Terrier

## Cairn Terriers:

### What a Unique Breed!

Your dog is special! She's your best friend, companion, and a source of unconditional love. Chances are that you chose her because you like Cairns and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Lively, with a friendly personality
- Loves to play games, especially fetch
- An affectionate companion and family dog
- Has a short, easy-to-care-for coat
- Easily motivated and trainable
- Small, but sturdy

However, no dog is perfect! You may have also noticed these characteristics:

- Needs a lot of activity and mental stimulation to avoid boredom vices
- Likely to attack other small animals, including cats
- Bold and fearless, may attack much larger dogs
- Easily bored and may find trouble
- Likes to dig
- Willful and stubborn if you don't show strong leadership

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! The Cairn Terrier is a quick study and a spirited companion. She loves performing tricks and playing with children.

The Cairn Terrier originated in Scotland over 200 years ago and was originally bred to control the vermin population in and around *cairn*, Scottish stacked-stone monuments. The Cairn enjoys playing with children and excels at learning tricks. A Cairn Terrier played "Toto" in *The Wizard of Oz*, after which the breed became a very popular pet. Cairn Terriers are a hardy breed with an average life span of 13-14 years.



## Your Cairn Terrier's Health

We know that because you care so much about your dog, you want to take good care of her. That is why we have summarized the health concerns we will be discussing with you over the life of your Cairn. By knowing about health concerns specific to Cairn Terriers, we can tailor a preventive health plan to watch for and hopefully prevent some predictable risks.

Many diseases and health conditions are genetic, meaning they are related to your pet's breed. There is a general consensus among canine genetic researchers and veterinary practitioners that the conditions we've described herein have a significant rate of incidence and/or impact in this breed. That does not mean your dog will have these problems; it just means that she is more at risk than other dogs. We will describe the most common issues seen in Cairn Terriers to give you an idea of what may come up in her future. Of course, we can't cover every possibility here, so always check with us if you notice any unusual signs or symptoms.

This guide contains general health information important to all canines as well as the most important genetic predispositions for Cairn Terriers. This information helps you and us together plan for your pet's unique medical needs. At the end of the booklet, we have also included a description of what you can do at home to keep your Cairn looking and feeling her best. You will know what to watch for, and we will all feel better knowing that we're taking the best possible care of your pal.

## General Health Information for your Cairn Terrier

### *Dental Disease*

**Dental disease** is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Cairn Terrier is more likely than other dogs to have problems

with her teeth. Dental disease starts with tartar build-up on the teeth and progresses to infection of the gums and roots of the teeth. If we don't prevent or treat dental disease, your buddy may lose her teeth and be in danger of damage to her kidneys, liver, heart, and joints. In fact, your Cairn Terrier's life span may even be cut short by one to three years! We'll clean your dog's teeth regularly and let you know what you can do at home to keep those pearly whites clean.

### *Infections*

Cairn Terriers are susceptible to bacterial and viral infections—the same ones that all dogs can get—such as **parvo**, **rabies**, and **distemper**. Many of these infections are preventable through vaccination, which we will recommend based on her age, the diseases we see in our area, and other factors.

### *Obesity*

**Obesity** can be a significant health problem in Cairn Terriers. It is a serious disease that may cause or worsen joint problems, metabolic and digestive disorders, back pain, and heart disease. Though it's tempting to give your pal food when she looks at you with those soulful eyes, you can "love her to death" with leftover people food and doggie treats. Instead, give her a hug, brush her fur or teeth, play a game with her, or perhaps take her for a walk. She'll feel better, and so will you!

### *Parasites*

All kinds of worms and bugs can invade your Cairn's body, inside and out. Everything from fleas and ticks to ear mites can infest her skin and ears. Hookworms, roundworms, heartworms, and whipworms can get into her system in a number of ways: drinking unclean water, walking on contaminated soil, or being bitten by an infected mosquito. Some of these parasites can be transmitted to you or a family member and are a serious concern for everyone. For your canine friend, these parasites can cause pain, discomfort, and even death, so it's important that we test for them on a regular basis. We'll also recommend preventive medication as necessary to keep her healthy.

### *Spay or Neuter*

One of the best things you can do for your Cairn is to have her spayed (neutered for males). In females, this means we surgically remove the ovaries and usually the uterus, and in males, it means we surgically remove the testicles. Spaying or neutering decreases the likelihood of certain types of cancers and eliminates the possibility of your pet becoming pregnant or fathering unwanted puppies. Performing this surgery also gives us a chance, while your pet is under anesthesia, to identify and address some of the diseases your dog is likely to develop. For example, if your pet needs hip X-rays or a puppy tooth extracted, this would be a good time—it's more convenient for you and easier on your friend too. Routine blood testing prior to surgery also helps us to identify and take precautions against common problems that increase anesthetic or surgical risk. Don't worry; we'll discuss the specific problems we will be looking for when the time arrives.



# Genetic Predispositions for Cairn Terriers

## Liver Problems

Your Cairn is more likely than other dogs to have a liver disorder called [portosystemic shunt](#) (PSS). Some of the blood supply that should go to the liver goes around it instead, depriving the liver of the blood flow it needs to grow and function properly. If your friend has PSS, his liver cannot remove toxins from his bloodstream effectively. To check for this problem, we'll conduct a liver function test in addition to a standard pre-anesthetic panel every time he undergoes anesthesia. If he develops symptoms such as stunted growth or seizures, we'll test his blood and possibly conduct an ultrasound scan of his liver. Surgery may be needed, but in some cases, we can treat with a special diet and medication.

## Eye Problems

Not many things have as dramatic an impact on your dog's quality of life as the proper functioning of his eyes. Unfortunately, Cairn Terriers can inherit or develop a number of different eye conditions, some of which may cause blindness if not treated right away, and most of which can be extremely painful! We will evaluate his eyes at every examination to look for any signs for concern.

- [Glaucoma](#), an eye condition that affects Cairn Terriers and people too, is an extremely painful disease that rapidly leads to blindness if left untreated. Symptoms include squinting, watery eyes, bluing of the cornea (the clear front part of the eye), and redness in the whites of the eyes. Pain is rarely noticed by pet owners though it is frequently there and can be severe. People who have certain types of glaucoma often report it feels like being stabbed in the eye with an ice pick! Yikes! In advanced cases, the eye may look enlarged or swollen like it's bulging. We'll perform an annual glaucoma screening to diagnose and start treatment as early as possible. Glaucoma is a medical emergency. If you see symptoms, don't wait to call us, go to an emergency clinic!
- [Cataracts](#) are a common cause of blindness in older Cairns. We'll watch for the lenses of his eyes to become more opaque—meaning they look cloudy instead of clear—when we examine him. Many dogs adjust well to losing their vision and get along just fine. Surgery to remove cataracts and restore sight may also be an option.
- [Distichiasis](#) is a condition caused by extra hairs that grow inside of the eyelid and rub on the surface of the eye. This is one of the most commonly inherited diseases in dogs, and your Cairn is more likely than other dogs to develop this painful condition. If untreated, these abnormal hairs can cause corneal ulcers and chronic eye pain. Several treatment options are available, and the prognosis is good once the hairs have been permanently removed.

## Diabetes

[Diabetes mellitus](#) is a fairly common disease in dogs. Any breed can be affected, but Cairns have an above average incidence. Dogs with diabetes are unable to regulate the metabolism of sugars in their bodies and require daily insulin injections. Diabetes is a serious condition and one that is important to diagnose and treat as early as possible. Symptoms include increased eating, drinking, and urination, along with weight loss. If he shows signs, we will conduct lab tests to determine if he has this condition and discuss treatment options with you. Treatment requires a serious commitment of time and resources. Well-regulated diabetic dogs today have the same life expectancy as other canines.

## Knee Problems

Sometimes your Cairn's kneecap (patella) may slip out of place. This is called [patellar luxation](#). You might notice that your pet, while running, suddenly picks up a back leg or skips and hops for a few strides. He might then kick his leg out sideways to pop the kneecap back in place. These are common signs of patellar luxation. If the problem is mild and involves only one leg, your friend may not require much treatment beyond arthritis medication. When symptoms are severe, surgery may be needed to realign the kneecap to keep it from luxating further.

## Pyruvate Kinase Deficiency

[Pyruvate kinase deficiency](#) is a genetic disease that causes the red blood cells to develop abnormally. Affected Cairns will be anemic, causing pale gums, exercise intolerance, and liver and spleen enlargement. Sadly, there is no cure and most dogs with this disease die by four years of age. There is a DNA test available to identify the disease in young puppies or for pet parents interested in breeding.

## Bleeding Disorders

There are several types of inherited bleeding disorders that occur in dogs. They range in severity from very mild to very severe. Many times a pet seems normal until a serious injury occurs or surgery is performed, and then severe bleeding can result. Cairns are particularly prone to some relatively rare diseases of the blood.

- [Hemolytic anemia](#) and [thrombocytopenia](#) occur when the immune system goes haywire and starts attacking the pet's own red blood cells or platelets. If the immune system destroys red blood cells, your dog quickly becomes anemic, weak, and lethargic. His gums will look whitish or yellow instead of a normal bright pink color. If the immune system destroys platelets, his blood won't clot properly and he'll have bruises or abnormal bleeding. We'll perform diagnostic testing for blood clotting to check for these problems before we perform any surgeries. To slow or stop the immune system's destruction of cells, we'll prescribe steroids and other immune-suppressive drugs. Sometimes an emergency transfusion of red blood cells or platelets is needed.

- **Von Willebrand's disease** is a blood clotting disorder frequently found in Cairn Terriers. We'll conduct diagnostic testing for blood clotting times or a specific DNA blood test for Von Willebrand's disease and other similar disorders to check for this problem before we perform surgery.

### *Allergies*

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust make people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy "**atopy**", and Cairns often have it. The feet, belly, folds of the skin, and ears are most commonly affected. Symptoms typically start between the ages of one and three and can get worse every year. Licking the paws, rubbing the face, and frequent ear infections are the most common signs of allergies. The good news is that there are many treatment options available for these conditions.

### *Cancer*

**Cancer** is a leading cause of death in older dogs. Your Cairn Terrier will likely live longer than many other breeds and therefore is more prone to get cancer in his golden years. Many cancers are curable by surgical removal, and some types are treatable with chemotherapy. Early detection is critical! We'll perform periodic diagnostic tests and look for lumps and bumps when we examine your pet.

### *Liver Problems*

Your Cairn Terrier is prone to a chronic liver disease called **hepatitis**, which can develop around middle age. We usually diagnose hepatitis with blood testing and liver biopsy, and we can treat it with medication and a special diet. Signs of liver disease do not usually occur until the liver is already significantly damaged or destroyed, so early detection and intervention with routine blood screening are crucial for detecting problems at an early, more treatable stage.

### *Hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's)*

**Cushing's Disease** is a malfunction of the adrenal glands that causes them to produce too much steroid hormone. This is a common problem in dogs, and your Cairn is more likely than other dogs to be affected. The condition usually develops slowly, and the early signs are easily missed. Symptoms include drinking and urinating more than normal, increased appetite, and reduced activity level followed later by a potbelly, thin skin, and hair loss. Treatment usually includes oral medications and requires close coordination with us to ensure correct dosing.

### *Hip Necrosis*

Young Cairn Terriers may be prone to a painful degenerative hip condition called **Legg-Calve-Perthes disease**. The exact cause of this condition is still not completely understood, but it is thought to be caused by a reduced blood supply to the hip, which causes the femoral head (the top of the thigh bone) to become brittle and fracture easily. Usually occurring between six and nine months of age, LCP causes pain and lameness in one or both rear legs, and often requires surgery.

### *Hip Dysplasia*

You've probably heard of **hip dysplasia**, an inherited disease that causes the hip joints to form improperly and leads to arthritis: it is common in some breeds. You may notice that your dog has lameness in his hind legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. Your veterinarian can treat the arthritis — the sooner the better — to avoid discomfort and pain. Your veterinary team will take X-rays of your dog's joints to identify the disease as early as possible. Surgery is sometimes considered in severe and life-limiting cases of hip dysplasia. Keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering.

### *Bladder or Kidney Stones*

There are a few different types of stones that can form in the kidney or in the bladder, and Cairn Terriers are more likely to develop them than other breeds. We'll periodically test his urine for telltale signs indicating the presence of kidney and bladder stones, which in addition are very painful! If your buddy has blood in his urine, can't urinate, or is straining to urinate, it is a medical emergency. Call us immediately!

### *Kidney Disease*

**Glomerulonephropathy** is an inherited disease that slowly damages your Cairn Terrier's kidneys, causing them to fail, often at an early age. Because damaged kidneys leak protein, we may be able to diagnose this disease by annually testing your pet's urine for excessive protein. Early detection leads to a happier pet and an easier, more affordable treatment plan. We may also recommend a special diet as part of his therapy.







- necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- ✓ She has low grooming needs. Brush her coat as needed, at least weekly to prevent mats.
  - ✓ Cairn Terriers generally have good teeth, and you can keep them perfect by brushing them at least twice a week!
  - ✓ Clean her ears weekly, even as a puppy. Don't worry—we'll show you how!
  - ✓ She's a smart dog with lots of energy, so keep her mind and body active, or she'll get bored. That's when the naughty stuff starts.
  - ✓ She has a high prey drive, so she needs to be leash walked and a fenced yard is a must.
  - ✓ She is well suited to apartment life as long as she is given daily walks.
  - ✓ Keep your dog's diet consistent and don't give her people food.
  - ✓ Feed a high-quality diet appropriate for her age.
  - ✓ Exercise your dog regularly, but don't overdo it at first.

### *What to Watch For*

Any abnormal symptom could be a sign of serious disease or it could just be a minor or temporary problem. The important thing is to be able to tell when to seek veterinary help and how urgently. Many diseases cause dogs to have a characteristic combination of symptoms, which together can be a clear signal that your Cairn Terrier needs help.

### Office calls

Give us a call for an appointment if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Change in appetite or water consumption
- ✓ Tartar build-up, bad breath, red gums, or broken teeth
- ✓ Itchy skin (scratching, chewing, or licking); hair loss
- ✓ Lethargy, mental dullness, or excessive sleeping
- ✓ Fearfulness, aggression, or other behavioral changes
- ✓ Slow or stunted growth; sometimes seizures after eating
- ✓ Increased hunger and thirst, weight loss
- ✓ Drinks and urinates more, eats more; potbelly, poor haircoat
- ✓ Increasing hip pain at less than a year old

### Emergencies

Seek medical care immediately if you notice any of these types of signs:

- ✓ Scratching or shaking the head, tender ears, or ear discharge
- ✓ Inability or straining to urinate; discolored urine
- ✓ Cloudiness, redness, itching, or any other abnormality involving the eyes
- ✓ Weakness, pale gums
- ✓ Gums that are a color other than bright pink
- ✓ Coughing, especially at night or upon rising after sleeping; rapid breathing at rest
- ✓ General reluctance to run or play

## Taking Care of Your Cairn Terrier at Home

Much of what you can do to keep your dog happy and healthy is common sense, just like it is for people. Watch her diet, make sure she gets plenty of exercise, regularly brush her teeth and coat, and call us or a pet emergency hospital when something seems unusual (see "What to Watch For" below). Be sure to adhere to the schedule of examinations and vaccinations that we recommend for her. This is when we'll give her the necessary "check-ups" and test for diseases and conditions that are common in Cairns. Another very important step in caring for your pet is signing up for pet health insurance. There will certainly be medical tests and procedures she will need throughout her life and pet health insurance will help you cover those costs.

### *Routine Care, Diet, and Exercise*

Build her routine care into your schedule to help your Cairn live longer, stay healthier, and be happier during her lifetime. We cannot overemphasize the importance of a proper diet and exercise routine.

- ✓ Supervise your pet as you would a toddler. Keep doors closed, pick up after yourself, and block off rooms as

## Genetic/DNA Testing

DNA analysis is a rapidly advancing field in healthcare for people and pets. Luckily, technologies exist to screen for hundreds of inherited diseases in pets, just like in people. By screening each pet for as many genetic diseases as possible, we will be better prepared to care for your pet throughout life. This is an important step in caring for your pet because it's always better to know your pal is at risk for a genetic disease before the problem is untreatable.

In an effort to screen for as many genetically linked diseases as possible, we may recommend the **Embark Health Genetic Screen** to screen for more than 150 genetic mutations that cause disease.

### Each Embark Health Genetic Screen Screens for

- ✓ Over 30 Musculoskeletal Problems
- ✓ Over 30 Metabolic Conditions
- ✓ Over 30 Eye Conditions
- ✓ Over 25 Blood and Clotting Disorders
- ✓ Over 10 Immune System Diseases
- ✓ Over 10 Urinary Tract Problems
- ✓ 10 Skin and Hair Conditions
- ✓ Cancer
- ✓ Dental Disease
- ✓ Drug Metabolism
- ✓ Heart Problems
- ✓ Hormonal Conditions
- ✓ Liver/Gastrointestinal Diseases
- ✓ Midline Defect
- ✓ Neuromuscular Diseases
- ✓ Reproduction Problems
- ✓ Respiratory Conditions

This one-time test is one of the best decisions you can make for your Cairn Terrier's medical care. With less than a few drops of blood, we'll have a lifetime of information to assist us in providing the very best care of your friend's unique and individual needs throughout her life!

For more information about genetic testing, visit <http://embarkvet.com>

Your Cairn counts on you to take good care of her, and we look forward to working with you to ensure that she lives a long and healthy life. Our goal is to provide the best health care possible: health care that's based on her breed, lifestyle, and age. Please contact us when you have questions or concerns:

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## Puppy to Adolescent Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Cairn Terrier Healthy	Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in People Years			
	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Cairn Terrier-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	○	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination  Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Distichiasis Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) von Willebrand's disease (vWD)
	○	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Blood disorder evaluation Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) von Willebrand's disease (vWD)
	○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Blood disorder evaluation Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss obedience and grooming	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) von Willebrand's disease (vWD)
	○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation  Pre-surgical diagnostics Discuss microchipping	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) Legg-Calve-Perthes disease and Hip dysplasia von Willebrand's disease (vWD) and Pyruvate kinase deficiency
	○	6 months to 1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Heart health check Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Bone and joint exam  Blood disorder evaluation  Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Distichiasis Portosystemic shunt (PSS) Allergies Polycystic kidney disease (PKD) Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, Hip dysplasia, and Patellar luxation von Willebrand's disease (vWD) and Pyruvate kinase deficiency  All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan

## Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Cairn Terrier Healthy			(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Cairn Terrier-Specific Problems We're Looking For
Adult-Mature: 18 to 39 in People Years		○		1 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation  Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Blood disorder evaluation  Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition Schedule spay/neuter after 1 year	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Glaucoma Allergies Polycystic kidney disease (PKD), Chronic hepatitis, and Urolithiasis Diabetes and Cushing's disease Hip dysplasia and Patellar luxation von Willebrand's disease (vWD), Pyruvate kinase deficiency, and Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia and Immune-mediated thrombocytopenia (IMHA/ITP)
Senior: 40 to 59 in People Years		○		10 years through 12 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation  Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Cancer screen Blood disorder evaluation  Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Glaucoma Allergies Polycystic kidney disease (PKD), Chronic hepatitis, and Urolithiasis Diabetes and Cushing's disease Hip dysplasia and Patellar luxation Melanoma, Sebaceous gland tumors, and Testicular neoplasia Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia and Immune-mediated thrombocytopenia (IMHA/ITP)
Golden Years: 60+ in People Years		○		13+ years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation  Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Cancer screen Blood disorder evaluation  Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cataracts and Glaucoma Allergies Polycystic kidney disease (PKD), Chronic hepatitis, and Urolithiasis Diabetes and Cushing's disease Hip dysplasia and Patellar luxation Melanoma, Sebaceous gland tumors, and Testicular neoplasia Immune-mediated hemolytic anemia and Immune-mediated thrombocytopenia (IMHA/ITP)

Note: We recommend twice-a-year examinations so that we may diagnose problems sooner. This approach also gives you the budget-friendly option of spreading preventive testing over two visits rather than one.