

Your Chinese Shar-Pei

Caring for Your Faithful Companion



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Chinese Shar-Peis: 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 Shar-Peis and you expected her to have certain traits that would fit your lifestyle:

- Quiet—not much of a barker
- Confident and self-reliant
- Protective of family; a good watch dog
- Docile and devoted
- Loyal to those she trusts
- Intelligent and easy to train

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

- Can be independent and strong-willed
- Makes a lot of snorting, snuffling, and wheezing noises; may snore
- May be territorial when it comes to cats and other dogs
- Overprotective of family and territory if not socialized properly
- Willful and stubborn if you don't show strong leadership
- Standoffish toward strangers

Is it all worth it? Of course! She's full of personality, and you love her for it! The Shar-Pei is a protective and devoted companion that needs a strong leader and early socialization. She is a good watchdog, but is often territorial; a securely fenced yard is a must.

The Chinese Shar-Pei is an ancient breed originating in China and bred for guarding, fighting, and farm work. They are known for their deep wrinkles and blue-black tongue. The Shar-Pei is a clean, calm, and dignified dog with low grooming needs. They are devoted to family but are not overly affectionate. The average life span of the Chinese Shar-Pei is 11-12 years.



General Health Information for your Chinese Shar-Pei

Dental Disease

Dental disease is the most common chronic problem in pets, affecting 80% of all dogs by age two. Unfortunately, your Chinese Shar-Pei 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 Chinese Shar-Pei'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

Chinese Shar-Peis 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 Chinese Shar-Peis. 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 Shar-Pei'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 Shar-Pei 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

Your Chinese Shar-Pei'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 Shar-Pei. By knowing about health concerns specific to Chinese Shar-Peis, 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 Chinese Shar-Peis 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 Chinese Shar-Peis. 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 Shar-Pei 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.

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 Chinese Shar-Peis

Bloat

Gastric dilatation volvulus, also known as GDV or bloat, usually occurs in dogs with deep, narrow chests. This means your Shar-Pei is more at risk than other breeds. When a dog bloats, the stomach twists on itself and fills with gas. The twisting cuts off the blood supply to the stomach and sometimes to the spleen. Left untreated, the disease is quickly fatal, sometimes in as little as half an hour. Your dog may retch or heave (but little or nothing comes up), act restless, have an enlarged abdomen, or lie in a prayer position (front feet down, rear end up). Preventive surgery in which the stomach is tacked down or sutured in place so that it is unlikely to twist is an option. If you see symptoms, take your pet to an emergency hospital immediately!

Allergies

In humans, allergies to pollen, mold, or dust makes people sneeze. In dogs, rather than sneezing, allergies make their skin itchy. We call this skin allergy "**atopy**", and Shar-Peis 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.

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, Chinese Shar-Peis 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 Chinese Shar-Peis 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!
- Dogs have a third eyelid that contains a gland that

produces about one-third of the fluid that bathes the eye. If this gland is sore or swollen, it looks like a red blob in the corner of the eye. This condition is called **cherry eye**, and it can occur very suddenly in one or both eyes. It's more common in puppies and young Shar-Peis than in adults. If your pet has cherry eye, we may treat it with ointment first, but surgery is often the best option.

- **Entropion** is a condition in which the eyelid rolls inward, causing the eyelashes to rub against the cornea (the surface of the eyeball). This is an extremely irritating and painful condition that can ultimately lead to blindness. Entropion can occur in any dog breed, however, your Shar-Pei is especially at risk for this heritable disorder. Surgical correction is usually successful if performed early.

Knee Problems

Sometimes your Shar-Pei'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.

Hip and Elbow Dysplasia

Both hips and elbows are at risk for **dysplasia**, an inherited disease that causes the joints to develop improperly and results in arthritis. Stiffness in your Shar-Pei's elbows or hips may become a problem for him, especially as he matures. You may notice that he begins to show lameness in his legs or has difficulty getting up from lying down. We can treat the arthritis—the sooner the better—to minimize discomfort and pain. We'll take X-rays of your dog's bones to identify issues as early as possible. Surgery is also sometimes a good option in severe and life-limiting cases. And keep in mind that overweight dogs may develop arthritis years earlier than those of normal weight, causing undue pain and suffering!

Amyloidosis

Amyloidosis refers to a disorder in which protein characteristics change, causing them to deposit in unwanted places. Unfortunately, this condition occurs more often in Chinese Shar-Peis than other breeds. In humans, amyloid deposits in the brain cause Alzheimer's disease. In pets, they can cause kidney, liver, adrenal gland, and pancreatic disease. In some breeds, amyloid deposits in the skin can cause high fever and swollen joints. Symptoms of amyloidosis may include poor appetite, increased urination and thirst, vomiting, diarrhea, and weight loss; symptoms usually start in young adulthood. While there is no cure, symptomatic treatment of fever, pain, and nausea can improve an affected pet's quality of life.



overabundance of these mites. In mild cases, pet owners may notice a few dry, irritated, hairless lesions. These often occur on the face or feet and may or may not be itchy. Secondary skin infections may also occur. Prompt veterinary care is important to keep the disease from getting out of hand. Many pets seem to outgrow the problem, while others require lifelong management.

Respiratory Distress Syndrome

Respiratory distress syndrome, also known as [brachycephalic syndrome](#), affects dogs with a short nose, like your Chinese Shar-Pei. Short-nosed dogs have the same amount of tissue in their noses and throats as longer-nosed dogs, but with less area to contain it. As a consequence, the soft palate at the back of the roof of the mouth is too long and may hang down into the airway. These dogs' nostrils are often too small, and sometimes the trachea, or windpipe, is narrow and undersized as well. All of these differences can lead to a narrow and obstructed airway such that many of these dogs can barely breathe! Watch for exercise intolerance, loud breathing, coughing, bluish gums, or fainting. With his short nose, your pet is also more likely to develop other problems, such as flatulence from excessive air intake, pneumonia from aspirating food, and heat stroke. In severe cases, surgical correction may be recommended to alleviate airway obstruction.

Skin Disease

Seborrhea is a common skin disease that can cause dry, flaky skin, called [seborrhea sicca](#), or greasy, oily skin, called [seborrhea oleosa](#). Both forms can make your pet itchy and uncomfortable, and skin infections are more likely to occur. Seborrhea is among the most annoying of diseases for Shar-Pei owners because it often make affected pets smelly and unattractive. [Hypothyroidism](#) (low thyroid hormone levels) can lead to seborrhea, as can allergies, Cushing's disease, and other problems.

Bone Pain

Growing Shar-Peis can suffer from a painful inflammation of the long bones in the legs called [eosinophilic panosteitis](#), or pano or eo-pan for short. It usually starts around six to ten months of age and shifts from leg to leg. We'll look for this condition upon examination; if your pal exhibits pain when the area is squeezed or palpated, we'll take X-rays to diagnose the problem. Panosteitis usually causes no permanent damage, but requires pain medication. If your dog has this condition and develops an abnormal gait to compensate for the sore leg(s), rehabilitation exercises may be required.

Skin Infections

Your Chinese Shar-Pei is prone to a form of skin infection called [lip-fold pyoderma](#), which occurs because the folds of skin along the lower jaw are usually moist. Bacteria and yeast can readily thrive here and cause a reddened, smelly area that is uncomfortable for your dog. We will examine him for this problem often (let us know if you see signs as well), and we'll recommend treatment with antibiotics as necessary. When symptoms are severe, the excess skin folds can also be surgically removed.

Mast Cell Tumor

Mast cell tumors are a particularly nasty type of skin cancer found more often in Chinese Shar-Peis than other breeds. The sooner these tumors are surgically removed, the better. Unfortunately, mast cell tumors often look very similar to other kinds of skin lumps and lesions, many of which are not harmful. Therefore, all suspicious lumps should be tested and surgically removed as soon as possible. Many cancers are cured by surgical removal, so early detection is critical.

Megaesophagus

The esophagus carries food from the mouth to the stomach through downward contractions. If the esophagus isn't contracting properly, food may remain in the esophagus, stretching it to "mega" size. If your Shar-Pei is affected, he may throw up tube-shaped portions of undigested food. Special feeding postures, dietary modifications, and medications may be needed to manage this problem. Unfortunately, dogs with megaesophagus commonly inhale bits of food while eating and can develop severe pneumonia. If you notice any unusual eating behaviors or vomiting after eating, be sure to let us know. A quick, painless x-ray can help us determine if your pet has this condition.

Inflammatory Bowel Disease

[Inflammatory bowel disease](#), or IBD, is an immune system disorder common in Shar-Peis in which the intestinal lining becomes overrun with immune system cells called lymphocytes and plasmacytes. The stomach and/or intestinal lining becomes thickened, affecting his ability to absorb nutrients properly. Chronic vomiting or diarrhea is common, or symptoms may flare up suddenly and then improve again for a time. Stress, diet change, or intestinal parasites can make IBD worse. If your friend has diarrhea or digestive upsets that are not explained by more common reasons, diagnostic tests, which may include intestinal biopsy, will be needed. Lifelong medications and special diets are usually required to keep IBD under control.

Mange

[Demodex](#) is a microscopic mite that lives in the hair follicles of all dogs. Normally a dog's immune system keeps the mites in check, but some breeds, like your Shar-Pei, may develop an

Nutrient Malabsorption

Cobalamin (Vitamin B12) is an essential nutrient necessary for life. A genetic defect, more likely in Shar-Peis than other dogs, disrupts the absorption of this nutrient in the intestines causing poor appetite, stunted growth, protein loss, and low red and white blood cell counts. Don't worry; we can test for this defect with blood work. If your buddy is affected, cobalamin injections will be needed for the rest of his life. Luckily, this disease is rare.

Taking Care of Your Chinese Shar-Pei 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 Shar-Peis. 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 Shar-Pei 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 necessary. This will keep her out of trouble and away from objects she shouldn't put in her mouth.
- ✓ Brush her coat as needed, at least weekly.
- ✓ Chinese Shar-Peis 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!
- ✓ Her deep wrinkles need to be cleaned and dried often to prevent infections.
- ✓ She was bred for fighting and may not get along with other dogs.
- ✓ She can be sensitive to warm weather; avoid any prolonged sun exposure and be very alert to the signs of heat stress.
- ✓ 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 Chinese Shar-Pei 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
- ✓ Dry, scaly, sometimes itchy, hairless patches on face or paws
- ✓ Lumps or bumps – regardless of size

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
- ✓ Dry heaving or a large, tight, painful abdomen
- ✓ General reluctance to run or play
- ✓ Tubular vomit, undigested food in vomit
- ✓ Loud breathing, tires easily during exercise
- ✓ Leg stiffness; reluctance to rise, sit, use stairs, run, or jump; "bunny hopping"

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 Shar-pei'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 Shar-Pei 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 Chinese Shar-Pei Healthy	Puppy to Adolescent: Infant to 17 in People Years			
	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Chinese Shar Pei-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	○	6–9 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss socialization and at-home puppy care	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Dental alignment, heart murmur, hernia Cherry eye and Entropion Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies Megacosophagus Cobalamin malabsorption
	○	10–13 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations Discuss caring for your dog's teeth and ears at home	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cherry eye and Entropion Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies, Seborrhea, and Demodicosis Megacosophagus Cobalamin malabsorption
	○	14–16 weeks	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Parasite detection/prevention Vaccinations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cherry eye and Entropion Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies, Seborrhea, and Demodicosis Megacosophagus Cobalamin malabsorption
	○	4–6 months	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Cancer screen Pre-surgical diagnostics Discuss bloat, stomach tack, and microchipping	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cherry eye and Entropion Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies, Seborrhea, and Demodicosis Megacosophagus Cobalamin malabsorption Hip dysplasia , Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Mast cell tumors
	○	6 months to 1 year	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss lifetime genetic considerations	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Cherry eye and Entropion Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies, Seborrhea, Demodicosis, and Skin fold pyoderma Megacosophagus Cobalamin malabsorption and Amyloidosis Hip dysplasia , Elbow dysplasia, Patellar luxation, and Panosteitis Mast cell tumors All major diseases important in the breed with diagnostic plan

Adult to Golden Years Health Care Recommendations

How We'll Keep Your Chinese Shar-Pei Healthy	(✓)	Age	Services We'll Provide	Chinese Shar Pei-Specific Problems We're Looking For
	○	1 years through 7 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss behavior and nutrition Schedule spay/neuter after 1 year	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Glaucoma Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies, Seborrhea, and Skin fold pyoderma Cobalamin malabsorption and Amyloidosis Hip dysplasia , Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Mast cell tumors
	○	8 years through 9 years	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Glaucoma Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies, Seborrhea, and Skin fold pyoderma Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) Cobalamin malabsorption and Amyloidosis Hip dysplasia , Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Mast cell tumors
	○	10+ years and older	Head-to-tail physical examination Eye disease screen Oral health assessment Skin and coat exam Internal organ health evaluation Endocrine screening Bone and joint exam Cancer screen Parasite prevention Vaccinations Discuss mental and physical well-being	Breed-specific physical abnormalities plus Glaucoma Brachycephalic syndrome Allergies, Seborrhea, and Skin fold pyoderma Inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) Cobalamin malabsorption and Amyloidosis Hip dysplasia , Elbow dysplasia, and Patellar luxation Mast cell tumors

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.