

Goldendoodles

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The Goldendoodle is a hybrid, also known as a cross-breed, mixed breed or just plain mutt. Not that there's anything wrong with that. Opening your heart and home to a hybrid dog is like opening a beautifully wrapped package on your birthday: you never know what's going to be inside.

It's often assumed that a hybrid will combine the best of two or more breeds, but genetics doesn't always work that way. The way genes combine and express themselves is not always subject to a breeder's control, even less so when two different breeds are crossed. Here's what you need to know if you're considering buying or adopting a Goldendoodle.

Is the Goldendoodle the Right Dog for You?

The Goldendoodle is a cross between a Golden Retriever and a Poodle, usually a Standard or Miniature Poodle. At their best, they are intelligent, friendly and affectionate. They come in three sizes: miniature, weighing 15 to 30 pounds; medium, 30 to 45 pounds; and standard, 45 to more than 100 pounds. Because they are a cross breed, their traits are not fixed, so there is not a guarantee that the Goldendoodle puppy you purchase will fall into the desired weight range.

Goldendoodles have a moderate activity level. Larger Goldendoodles may be more active than their smaller kin. They need a good walk or active playtime each day, and if you're interested, they are athletic enough to participate in such dog sports as agility, flyball, obedience and rally. They can also be excellent therapy dogs.

Both of the breeds used to create Goldendoodles are smart and learn quickly. If you begin socialization and training early and use positive reinforcement techniques such as praise, play and food rewards, you will be rewarded with a wonderful companion.

Poodles have a reputation for being hypoallergenic, meaning that they can be tolerated by people who have allergies to dogs. Because they have the Poodle in their heritage, Goldendoodles are sometimes promoted as being hypoallergenic. But allergies are caused not by a particular dog coat type but by dander, the dead skin cells that are shed by all dogs (and people, for that matter). There is no scientific evidence that any breed or cross breed is more or less allergenic than any

other dog. Some people with mild allergies react less severely to particular dogs, but no reputable breeder will guarantee that her dogs are hypoallergenic.

Goldendoodles can have different types of fur. Some look like shaggy retrievers, others resemble a Poodle with loose curls and some fall somewhere in the middle. They are not low-maintenance dogs when it comes to grooming. Plan to brush the Goldendoodle at least every other day, using a slicker brush, and have him clipped every eight to 12 weeks.

Ear infections can be a problem in Goldendoodles. Be sure to keep the ears dry and clean, especially after the dog has had a bath or gone swimming. In addition, trim his nails at least monthly—more frequently if necessary—and brush his teeth as often as possible, especially if he's on the small side. Small dogs are especially prone to periodontal disease.

Goldendoodles are companion dogs. They love being with people and need to live in the house, never outdoors.

Goldendoodle puppies are adorable, and it's one of the reasons they are so popular. Cute puppies sell, and that makes the Goldendoodle a favorite of puppy mills and greedy, irresponsible breeders. But there's no need to pay big bucks for a Goldendoodle. You can often find a wonderful example of this hybrid dog at your local shelter or through adoption organizations. If you do choose to buy one, however, select a breeder who has done the health testing to ensure that her puppies won't carry the genetic diseases common to both Golden Retrievers and Poodles.

6 Tips to Bring Home a Healthy Goldendoodle Puppy

1. Finding a good breeder is more important than finding the right puppy. A good breeder will match you with the right puppy, and will without question have done all the health certifications necessary to screen out health problems as much as possible. Start your search for a breeder on the website of the [Goldendoodle Association of North America](#).
2. Consider an adult dog from a shelter or a rescue group. Many of the health problems in Goldendoodles aren't apparent in puppyhood, but by adopting an adult dog, most of them can be ruled out. In addition, Goldendoodles can live 10 to 15 years, so an adult dog will still be a part of your family for a long time to come.
3. Puppy or adult, take your Goldendoodle to your veterinarian soon after adoption. Your veterinarian will be able to spot visible problems, and will work with you to set up a preventive regimen that will help you avoid many health issues. Ask specifically about dental care, as most toy breeds suffer from dental problems, as well as tips on dealing with tear staining.
4. Don't ever, ever, ever buy a puppy from a pet store. You're more likely to get an unhealthy, unsocialized and difficult to housetrain puppy and will be supporting the cruelty of high-volume puppy mills.
5. Make sure you have a good contract with the seller, shelter or rescue group that spells out responsibilities on both sides. In states with "puppy lemon laws," be sure you and the person you get the dog from both understand your rights and recourses.

Health Issues Common to Goldendoodle

All hybrid dogs have the potential to develop genetic health problems, just as purebred dogs can and just as all people have the potential to inherit a particular disease. Run, don't walk, from any breeder who does not offer a health guarantee on puppies, who tells you that the Goldendoodle is 100 percent healthy and has no known problems, or who tells you that her puppies are isolated from the main part of the household for health reasons. A reputable breeder will be honest and open about health problems in the Goldendoodle and the incidence with which they occur in her lines.

Goldendoodles may develop health conditions common to both Golden Retrievers and Poodles, especially if you aren't cautious about whom you buy from. They include hip dysplasia, a skin disease called sebaceous adenitis, a heart condition called subvalvular aortic stenosis, Addison's disease, and eye diseases such as progressive retinal atrophy, cataracts and glaucoma.

At a minimum, ask the breeder to show evidence that both of a puppy's parents have hip certifications from the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals, an OFA heart clearance and certification from the Canine Eye Registry Foundation that the eyes are healthy. A plus would be an OFA elbow clearance for standard Goldendoodles, an OFA knee clearance for small or medium-size Goldendoodles and a DNA test for progressive retinal atrophy. For more information, see the Red Ribbon and Blue Ribbon [requirements](#) set by the Goldendoodle Association of North America.

Do not purchase a puppy from a breeder who cannot provide you with written documentation that the parents were cleared of health problems that affect the breed. Having the dogs "vet checked" is not a substitute for genetic health testing.

Condition	Risk Profile	Cost to Diagnose and Treat
Hip Dysplasia	Medium	\$1,500-\$6,000
Subvalvular Aortic Stenosis	Medium	\$500-\$1,500
Cataracts	Medium	\$1,500-\$5,000
Addison's Disease	Medium	\$1,000-\$5,000
Estimates based on claims paid by Embrace Pet Insurance		

Pet Insurance for Goldendoodles

Pet insurance for Goldendoodles costs more than for mixed breed dogs. This is because Goldendoodles are more likely than mixed breed dogs to make claims for hereditary conditions that are expensive to treat.

Embrace [pet insurance plans](#) offer full coverage for all breed-specific conditions (excluding those that are pre-existing) to which Goldendoodles are susceptible. The best time to get pet insurance for your Goldendoodle is when he's a healthy puppy. You can't predict what will happen in the future, and pet insurance is the one thing you can't get when you need it the most.