

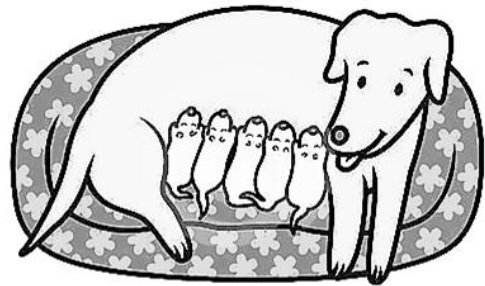
Puppies—the First 8 Weeks

Human babies and puppies may look different, but they have something in common. Both are mammals. Mammals share certain features, including lungs for breathing, a backbone, a constant body temperature, and at least some hair or fur on their bodies.

The most special feature, however, is their moms. Most mammal moms give live birth to their young, instead of laying eggs like fish, birds, and reptiles. They also have special milk-producing glands, known as mammary glands, to provide food for their babies.

Like human babies, puppies are born helpless. But unlike babies, puppies' eyes and ears are sealed shut. Although a newborn puppy can neither see nor hear, its nose works from the start. The first thing that the puppy smells is the animal licking it. The message sent to the puppy's brain is, "I am your mother and this is what I smell like."

Puppies sleep and drink their way through their first few days and weeks of life. Barely able to crawl, they depend upon their mother for food. Puppies grow strong on their mother's milk. It's the perfect baby food. As with other mammals, the mother dog's mammary glands produce the right blend of water, protein, fat, sugar, and minerals to help her puppies survive. The milk also contains antibodies—disease-fighting proteins—that help the puppies to stay healthy.



After the puppies eat, the mother dog washes them with her tongue. The licking stimulates (triggers; sets off) digestion and helps put the puppies to sleep. She also cleans up any wastes produced by the puppies. Just like dogs in the wild, she doesn't want any smells to lead other animals to her babies.

Between 10 days and three weeks, the puppies liven up. First their eyes open up, then their ear canals. They start wobbling around on unsteady legs, trying to get their balance. Before long, they wag their tails, take a leap, and let out their first bark.

Around four to five weeks, playtime begins. In rough-and-tumble games, the puppies get their first language lessons. As they play with toys and with

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A Look at Mammals

each other, they practice the noises and body movements that dogs use to send messages to each other and to us. Puppies also cut their baby teeth at this time. They may have weak jaws, but their small pointed teeth are sharp. With nips and yelps, puppies find out what it feels like to bite and to be bitten. When the puppies playfully nip their mother, she sends a new message. With a nip and a growl, she shows puppies that every pack has a leader. In this pack, it's Mom.

At about 8 weeks, the puppies are eating solid food and are ready to leave home. Now they must learn to live with humans and perhaps with other kinds of animals. However, with proper training and care, the puppies will soon form a strong bond with their new, human families.



Vocabulary:

Mammal Mammary Glands Antibody Stimulate Backbone

Things to remember about mammals:

All mammals have hair

All mammals have lungs

All mammals are warm blooded

Mammals can live on land or in water

All female mammals produce milk for their babies.

Most mammals give birth to live babies. But there are a few mammals who lay eggs.