

FREE BONUS GUIDE

IVDD Prevention Blueprint

Protect your Dachshund's back, every day.

Bonus guide for The Complete Dachshund Guide

Before We Begin

If you share your life with a Dachshund, you've probably heard of IVDD. Maybe you know a Doxie who has suffered from it. Maybe it's the thing you worry about most.

IVDD (intervertebral disc disease) is the most common serious health problem in Dachshunds. You can't control your dog's genes, but there's a lot you **can** do every day to reduce the strain on their back and to spot problems early.

This blueprint shows you how. It's practical, everyday advice to use alongside your vet's guidance.

> **Important:** this guide is general information, not veterinary advice. If you're worried about your dog's back, please contact your vet. Sudden weakness or inability to walk is an emergency.



Before We Begin





Understanding IVDD

The spine and its discs

Your dog's spine is made of small bones (vertebrae) with soft, cushioning discs between them. The spinal cord runs through the middle.

In many Dachshunds, these discs age and harden early, sometimes when the dog is still young. A hardened disc can bulge or burst and press on the spinal cord. That causes pain and, in more serious cases, weakness or paralysis.

Why Dachshunds?

- **Genes:** many Dachshunds carry genes linked to early disc changes and to their short legs.
- **Body shape:** a long back and short legs put extra stress on the spine.
- **Lifestyle:** jumping, stairs, rough play and extra weight add strain.

Many studies suggest that a significant proportion of Dachshunds will show signs of back problems during their lives. Not every Doxie gets IVDD, but every Doxie owner should know how to reduce the risk.

Understanding IVDD

What IVDD can look like

Signs can come on suddenly or gradually:

- **Mild:** reluctance to jump or use stairs, a hunched back, shaking, yelping when picked up, not wanting to be touched, a tense tummy.
- **Moderate:** wobbly or weak back legs, knuckling (walking on the tops of the paws), crossing the back legs.
- **Severe:** unable to walk, dragging the back legs, loss of bladder or bowel control.

Neck problems can also happen: a dog may hold their head low, not want to turn their head, or cry when lowering their head to eat.

> **Any of these signs means a vet visit. Weakness, dragging legs or inability to walk means an emergency vet visit, straight away.** Keep your dog still and calm while you get help.



Pillar 1: A Lean Body

Extra weight is one of the biggest risk factors you can control. Every extra kilo puts more strain on your Doxie's long back.

Check your Doxie's shape

- You should feel the ribs easily, with a thin layer of fat.
- From above, there should be a visible waist.
- From the side, the tummy should tuck up.

Steps to keep them lean

1. Ask your vet for your dog's ideal weight.
2. Weigh every meal with kitchen scales.
3. Count treats as part of daily food.
4. Use puzzle feeders and snuffle mats.
5. Weigh your dog monthly.

See your Wiener Meal Guide for more detail.



Pillar 2: No More Jumping

Jumping down from sofas, beds and cars puts a sudden, heavy load on the spine.

Step 1: Ramps and Steps

Put a ramp or dog steps by every sofa and bed your Doxie uses. Ramps with a gentle slope and non-slip surface are ideal.

Step 2: Teach the Ramp

1. Place a treat at the bottom of the ramp, then partway up, then at the top.
2. Let your Doxie follow the treats.
3. Say "ramp" as they use it.
4. Reward every time they use it, for weeks.

Step 3: Block the Shortcuts

When you're not there to supervise, block access to furniture with gates or by closing doors. Old habits die hard.

Step 4: The Car

Always lift your Doxie in and out of the car with both ends supported, or use a ramp. Never let them jump out.

Pillar 2: No More Jumping

Floor-level living

Many Doxie owners choose to put dog beds on the floor next to the sofa, and keep their dog off furniture entirely. Your dog can still be close to you, without the jump.



Pillar 3: Stairs & Floors

Stairs

Stairs, especially going down, put stress on the back. Many vets advise limiting stair use for Dachshunds.

- Use baby gates at the top and bottom of stairs.
- Carry your Doxie up and down using the safe lift.
- If your Doxie must use stairs, take them slowly on a harness.

Slippery floors

Slipping and sliding on wooden or tiled floors can cause strain.

- Use rugs and runners on slippery floors.
- Keep your Doxie's nails short so they can grip.
- Trim the fur between the paw pads.



Pillar 4: Safe Handling

The safe lift

1. Say "up" so your dog knows it's coming.
2. One hand under the chest, behind the front legs.
3. The other hand under the bottom and back legs.
4. Lift with the back level, like carrying a tray.
5. Hold close to your body.
6. Lower gently, all four paws at once.

Never

- lift by the front legs, under the armpits only, or by the scruff
- let your Doxie stand on their back legs to beg for long periods
- let children pick your Doxie up

Harness, not collar

Use a well-fitted harness for walks. Pulling on a collar strains the neck, and neck disc problems are common in Dachshunds.



Pillar 5: Strong, Fit Muscles

Strong core and back muscles help support the spine. Regular, moderate exercise is far better than long walks at weekends and nothing during the week.

Everyday fitness

- Daily walks at a steady pace.
- Walking on different surfaces: grass, sand, gentle slopes.
- Sniff walks to keep the brain busy without speed.

Gentle strength games

Check with your vet before starting, especially if your dog has had back problems.

- **Slow cavaletti:** lay poles flat on the ground and walk your Doxie slowly over them.
- **Gentle hills:** walk slowly up and down gentle grassy slopes.
- **Sit-to-stand:** a few slow, controlled sits and stands for a treat.

Avoid anything that makes your dog twist, leap or stand on their back legs. A vet physiotherapist can give you a safe, personalised exercise plan.

Pillar 5: Strong, Fit Muscles

Play that protects the back

- Throw toys along the ground, never high.
- No tug games that shake your dog from side to side.
- Avoid rough play with big dogs.
- Stop play before your Doxie gets wild.



If IVDD Happens

What to do

1. **Keep your dog still.** Put them in a crate or small pen.
2. **Call your vet straight away.** Describe the signs.
3. **Carry them flat** if you need to move them, supporting the whole body. A flat board or tray can help.
4. **Don't give any human medicines.** Many are dangerous for dogs.

Treatment

Your vet will decide on treatment, which may include strict crate rest, medication, or surgery for more serious cases. Follow your vet's instructions carefully.

Why crate training now matters

Many Doxies with back problems need weeks of strict crate rest. A dog who already loves their crate copes much better. That's why crate training is part of IVDD prevention (see Chapter 5 of your main guide).



If IVDD Happens

Life after IVDD

Many dogs recover well with the right treatment and rehabilitation. Your vet may recommend physiotherapy or hydrotherapy. After recovery, these prevention pillars become even more important.



Getting Your Home Ready

If your Doxie ever needs strict rest, a ready home makes it much easier. These steps also help day to day.

The rest area

- A crate or small pen your Doxie already loves.
- Soft, supportive bedding on a non-slip base.
- A quiet spot where your dog can still see you.
- Food and water bowls raised slightly so they don't have to stretch down far, if your vet advises it.

Keeping a resting dog calm

- Lick mats and gentle sniff games (inside the crate).
- Short, calm visits and gentle strokes.
- Background music.
- A predictable routine.

Toileting during rest

Your vet will tell you how much your dog can move. Many dogs on rest are carried outside to toilet on a lead, then carried straight back.

Practice now

Practise short crate rests at home now, when your dog is healthy. Give a chew, close the door for 30–60 minutes, and reward calm. A dog who knows how to rest calmly in a crate is far better prepared.



10 Popular Questions Answered

1. Can IVDD be completely prevented? No, genetics play a big role. But you can reduce the strain on your dog's back.

2. At what age does IVDD happen? It's most common in middle age, often between 3 and 7 years, but it can happen at any age.

3. Should my Doxie never use stairs? Many vets advise limiting stairs. Ask your vet about your dog.

4. Are ramps really worth it? Yes. They remove one of the most common daily strains on the back.

5. Is it OK for my Doxie to sit up and beg? Not for long periods. It puts strain on the back.



10 Popular Questions Answered

6. Does weight really matter? Yes. Extra weight adds strain to the spine.

7. Collar or harness? A harness for walks.

8. My Doxie yelped when I picked them up. What should I do? Watch closely and contact your vet, especially if it happens again or other signs appear.

9. Can my Doxie play with other dogs? Yes, with gentle dogs of a similar size, and no rough play.

10. What's the most important thing I can do today? Put ramps by the sofa and bed, and check your dog's weight.



CHECKLIST

Your Back-Safe Checklist

- ☐ Ramps or steps by every sofa and bed.
- ☐ Gates on stairs.
- ☐ Rugs on slippery floors.
- ☐ Harness for walks.
- ☐ Everyone knows the safe lift.
- ☐ Lean body weight.
- ☐ Regular, steady exercise.
- ☐ Crate trained.
- ☐ Emergency vet number saved.



A Final Word



Protecting your Dachshund's back isn't about wrapping them in cotton wool. It's about small, everyday choices that add up to a happier, healthier life.

Ramps, a lean body, a harness and a safe lift: simple habits that make a big difference.