Keep your dog healthy this winter

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It's a fact - our pets need regular exercise to stay physically fit and mentally sharp. Daily exercise can also help to decrease doggie boredom and boost your bond with your four-footed companion. When wintertime brings shorter days and less opportunity for long walks, try these easy indoor exercise ideas from Pet-Helper.com.

Play Ball– Your dog will enjoy pushing a **tennis ball** with his nose around the living room. Or toss a ball across the room and let him fetch – this works best with smaller breeds.

Hide and seek– Leave your dog in one room with a stay command while you "hide" in a nearby room and then call him to you. As he gets more skilled, make the game more fun by hiding behind a door, in a closet or under a blanket. With two humans, a more complex version of hide and seek involves one person going to another room and calling the dog. When the dog has found that person the other one calls him back, perhaps to a new location, and the routine is repeated.

Climb time – If you have a flight of stairs, roll a ball down the steps and teach your dog to retrieve it while you wait at the top.

Working Dog – teach her to put her own **toys** away in a basket or **toy box** on command. Some dogs get good at bringing keys, purse, umbrella, baby's blanket or even the telephone on command. Teach her to wake the children for school.

Find the Toy - If you name your dog's **toys**, you can ask the dog to bring you a specific toy. Once your dog has this game down pat, try taking the toy out of his sight and placing it in an easily accessible spot in a dark room.

Treat time – Show your dog a favorite **treat**, then place it under an overturned **bowl** or box. Hide treats in unusual spots, like shoes or on a shelf and ask the dog to seek. For Variety, try one of our **treat dispensing toys**.

Over the mountain – A box or kitchen chair can be a great high jump course. Start small and raise the bar as your dog gets limbered up. Go easy on puppies – keep the box low while they are still developing. Or take the fun outdoors with a **Backyard Agility Starter Kit**.

Work on basic commands and tricks – a rainy day is a good excuse to perfect rolling over, sitting up, playing dead or even sit and stay. Teach your dog to walk around the house with you and sit when you stop (heeling) – all that sitting and getting up works like doggy pushups.