Many of the health issues that dogs manifest early in life are associated with delayed or accelerated growth. These include:

1. Joint and mobility issues
2. Issues with heart development
3. Muscle and bone disease
4. Excess weight and obesity

Being overweight can shorten a dog’s lifespan by up to 2.5 years depending on breed.

A new study of evidence-based growth charts compared growth patterns of healthy and unhealthy dogs, showing 68% of dogs that were obese by 3 years of age crossed two or more centiles (the lines on the growth charts), suggesting they had grown too quickly.

Almost half (49%) of dogs that became underweight by 3 years of age crossed two or more centiles downward, putting them at risk for bone disease, endocrine disease and cardiovascular disease.

Our research suggests that evidence-based growth standards can potentially help veterinarians and pet owners understand and monitor puppies’ healthy growth early on.

With more than half of all pets in the US and UK considered to be overweight or have obesity, it’s clear new owners need to start healthy habits early.