

# Veterinary Care of Chimpanzees



## What is veterinary medicine?

- Veterinary medicine is a type of science that deals with the health of animals.
- Just like humans, animals sometimes need doctors to help them stay healthy, or to heal from an illness or wound.
- Veterinarians are doctors who take care of animals.
- Veterinarians go to school for eight years to earn their degrees in veterinary medicine. They learn to prevent, treat, and diagnose animals and their medical conditions.
- Veterinarians can choose to focus on different areas of study. While some choose to take care of pets, like cats and dogs, others may focus on livestock, zoo animals, or wildlife, just to name a few!
- Veterinary Technicians are trained to help veterinarians care for animals by doing things like performing tests or giving medications.

## What is veterinary medicine like for chimpanzees?

- Chimpanzees are humans' closest living relative. Chimps share more than 98% of their genes with humans, and like us, they also deal with aging and medical conditions.
- Chimpanzees have large brains and cranial areas just like humans, which gives chimps the ability to develop social relationships with each other like we do. It also means they are able to determine unique likes and dislikes, just like us!
- While we're not that different from chimpanzees, there are some key differences in our bodies. For example, chimpanzees have longer fingers and shorter thumbs than humans do. They need them to be able to brachiate (or swing) through trees!
- In the wild chimpanzees may not have access to veterinary care, but at a



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sanctuary like Chimp Haven, veterinarians help the chimps stay healthy or take care of them when they get sick.

- Veterinarians at Chimp Haven do annual exams of the colony to maintain their health. Some of the things veterinarians check during the chimps' annual physical exams are:
  - Dental care: Just like humans, chimpanzees have 32 teeth, with much larger canine teeth. The chimps receive a full dental cleaning and check-up every year, similar to the check-up that you might receive from your dentist!
  - Healthy body weight: Male chimpanzees can weigh up to 150 pounds, with females being only slightly smaller. The largest male chimpanzee at the sanctuary is Ricky. He weighs 235 pounds! Our veterinary team checks every chimps' weight during their annual check-up to make sure they are maintaining a healthy body weight. If not, our team may work with them on an exercise regimen!
  - Chronic illness: Just like humans, heart disease is the most common cause of death among chimpanzees. Many of the chimps at Chimp Haven have chronic illnesses, and our veterinary team closely monitors them and ensures they are receiving the care they need.
- Veterinarians are skilled to provide proper care to all types of species. All species are unique, and chimpanzees are no exception! Check back for next week's lesson to learn more about how we care for the chimpanzees at Chimp Haven!



## What is Chimp Haven?

- Chimp Haven is a big sanctuary where chimpanzees live together in family groups, also known as troops.
- Chimp Haven is located in Louisiana.
- More than 300 chimpanzees live at Chimp Haven today!



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# Veterinary Word Search

I J V J N B R P O J V Z D R B I X D X Q  
T U I H E A L T H F X N U T R I T I O N  
Y I I K O H R K Y Q V Q B C F A S S N I  
D C I N K Y R C X Z S C P H G X Z M W N  
M E Y T O K M C P G F O B I O L O G Y E  
L A Q H P R A N I M A L V M R E T T J G  
Q E X A M D O V M Y X O G P A Z S H W K  
A O M E D I C I N E U N F A A Q S O C I  
X M B L V W T D G V H Y H N T D Z B A G  
R Y D B U K E V P E C T L Z T O S S R F  
E V T E V A L U A T I O N E R C V E I U  
X O E P O E S I J E Z N H E O T R R L J  
D W D R M S B G X R I B C O O O L V Y Q  
F O A H D I Z Y M I H O S C P R F A F Y  
M H L K T E T G Z N J K J Q O X P T W I  
Q S L D Y G S Z A A B D E N T Z V I R B  
Z J V C J P O S B R C I M X M R T O M K  
Q X S O Q C F M Q I I I D K D X K N Q C  
H G O C E G A V L A S Y Y U Z K F L Z P  
P G W Q D I E T J N D N U E F R T X K V

Veterinarian

Observation

Juice

Doctor

Biology

Colony

Health

Evaluation

Troop

Animal

Exam

Nutrition

Chimpanzee

Medicine

Diet



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# What's in a mouth?

Just like humans, chimpanzees have 32 teeth, with much larger canine teeth. The chimps receive a full dental cleaning and check-up every year, similar to the check-up that you might receive from your dentist! Make your own mouth model, and count the teeth!

## Suggested Materials

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Mini marshmallows
- Empty egg carton (use in place of marshmallows)
- Marker
- Glue

### Step 1

Draw a big oval on your piece of construction paper.

### Step 2

Cut out your oval.

### Step 3

Fold your oval in half – that's your mouth!

### Step 4

Using another piece of construction paper, cut out a tongue shape.

### Step 5

Glue the tongue inside of the mouth by the crease.

### Step 6

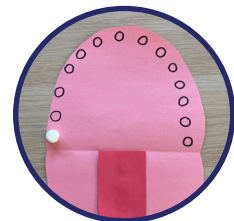
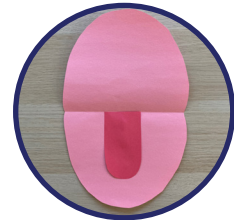
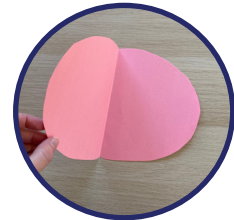
Open up your sheet. Draw small circles where the marshmallows (teeth) will go. Remember you need 32!

### Step 7

Glue each marshmallow down onto the circles.

### Step 8

Let your mouth dry then chomp it together!



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# Veterinary Care at Chimp Haven



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## What is veterinary medicine like at Chimp Haven?

- Chimp Haven has an all-female veterinary team of eight people.
- The sanctuary veterinarians act not only as doctors, but also as surgeons, dentists, nurses, and radiologists! Each team member adapts to a role depending on the chimpanzees' needs.
- Good nutrition, housing, vaccinations, procedures, and routine doctor's visits are all essential to good veterinary care. The team works hard to meet the chimpanzees' needs!
- Chimp Haven's veterinarians typically perform 12 doctor's visits per week, and veterinary technicians perform daily observations of each chimpanzee.
- Each chimpanzee receives one physical exam per year. Exams are performed very quickly, taking an average of just 10-13 minutes. The team averages 250 or more exams each year!
- Within their social troops, chimpanzees work disagreements out with their



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bodies, and sometimes they fight. They also work things out and forgive easily! The most common condition the veterinary team sees each week is wounding.

- The chimps play an important role in their own healthcare. More than half of the chimps will take shots willingly, and many will present their wounds, holding still for a stethoscope, and allowing for temperature readings. Chimp Haven was even able to care for a diabetic chimpanzee that required daily insulin!
- When you went to the doctor for your last checkup, did they ask you lots of questions? Maybe they asked you what hurts or even what you ate for breakfast.
  - Chimpanzees can't use words to directly communicate, so the team has to be very observant.
  - Forming relationships with the residents is key to their veterinary care.
  - The chimpanzees love to be tickled with long handled spoons, and to have play sessions with the team. They even laugh! The team builds bonds with the chimpanzees, and their close relationships help them notice when they are not feeling well.
  - If a chimpanzee would normally come out to play during morning rounds to take their medicine, and they don't show up one day, it may be a clue that something is off. The veterinary team notices small changes that may indicate differences in the chimpanzees and their health.
- Giving the chimps their medicine:
  - Each chimpanzee is an individual with different needs and preferences. This applies to their food choices, and even the medicines they take!
  - Chimp Haven residents are on a variety of medications. It takes the veterinary team about five hours each day to give all the chimps in the colony their medication.
  - Chimpanzees have an air sac in their lower throat that helps them create super loud vocalizations. Chimpanzees may also learn to



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recognize human vocalizations, which is helpful at Chimp Haven when the veterinary team is calling names for medications.



- Chimpanzees are very observant with a keen sense of smell, which makes it challenging for the veterinary team when preparing daily medications. Some chimpanzees, like Juan, will take anything while others, like Nina, don't always like taking their medicine.
- Have you ever helped give a dog medication? If so, you may have hidden the medication in a food that the dog loves, like cheese or peanut butter. At Chimp Haven, the veterinary team hides medications in juice, peanut butter, a banana or applesauce! The chimps are very smart: If medications are hidden in food the chimpanzees will normally smell it before accepting it.
- The team has a fun and unique challenge in finding flavorings and creative solutions that are just right for the chimpanzees! Grape and fruit punch are favorite flavors of the colony.
- Chimpanzees also need vitamins for their health just like you and me. Colony favorites include vitamin C tablets!

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# Morning Observations at Chimp Haven

Help Chimp Haven's veterinarian tell a story about her day by filling in the blanks!

Every day is a/an **(noun)** \_\_\_\_\_ at Chimp Haven. First, I stop to say **(a greeting)** \_\_\_\_\_ to the chimpanzee troop outside of my **(place)** \_\_\_\_\_. Henry, Juan, and Midge give me a **(adjective)** \_\_\_\_\_ welcome, and then I start my day! Next, I grab a bottle of **(liquid drink)** \_\_\_\_\_. The chimpanzees love **(flavor)** \_\_\_\_\_, so they'll be excited to see my **(color)** \_\_\_\_\_ bottle. Now I'm ready to start my chimpanzee **(noun)** \_\_\_\_\_. While most of the chimpanzees rush over to receive their **(flavor)** \_\_\_\_\_ flavored **(liquid drink)** \_\_\_\_\_, some chimpanzees do not want to be disturbed. There are more than **(number)** \_\_\_\_\_ chimpanzees in the colony, so I spend time saying **(a greeting)** \_\_\_\_\_ to the troops. Building relationships is key! After a long day of pant-hoots and **(liquid drink)** \_\_\_\_\_ squirts my **(noun)** \_\_\_\_\_ are complete! The **(adjective)** \_\_\_\_\_ part of each day is observing the chimpanzees live the Chimp Life.



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# DIY Stethoscope

Veterinarians use all kinds of tools to care for animals. A stethoscope is an instrument used for listening to different sounds of the body like the heart. Chimp Haven's veterinarian uses a stethoscope for each chimpanzee physical exam! Create your own by following these steps!

## Suggested Materials

- Pipe cleaners or a headband
- Glue – hot glue works best!
- Construction paper or felt
- Ribbon

## Directions

### Step 1

Gather your materials!

### Step 2

Cut two small circles out of paper or felt – the circles should be the same size.

### Step 3

Would you like to put a shape on your stethoscope? If so, cut that out too. We chose a heart!

### Step 4

Sandwich one end of the ribbon between the two circles and glue them on.

### Step 5

If you are using pipe cleaners shape one into a big “u” shape.

### Step 6

Wrap the other end of the ribbon around the center of your headband or pipe cleaner.

**All done! You created a stethoscope.**

Share your stethoscope with us  
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# Key Terms



- **Veterinarian** (vet·er·i·nar·i·an) – doctors who take care of animals
- **Observation** (ob·ser·va·tion) – the act of seeing or noticing something
- **Biology** (bi·ol·o·gy) – the study of living things
- **Evaluation** (e·val·u·a·tion) – making a judgement about something



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