



Grooming Tips

- **Brushing and combing:** Your Westie should be brushed or combed daily if possible, but at least several times a week. Brushing is important to keep the scalp healthy and distribute the natural oils to create a nice, shiny coat. It will also prevent matting of the hair. Be sure to check for mats while you are brushing, especially in the "armpits". The type of brush or comb used will depend largely on the type of coat your dog has. Some Westies have a very fine coat and a wide-tooth comb won't do much for them. While other dogs have a naturally heavy coat and a flea comb will be a struggle to get through it. A lot of people find that the hair brushes with round balls on the end of each bristle gets through the coat without a lot of tugging. The other issue is to comb out the undercoat so that the skin can breathe. On a fine-haired dog, a flea comb will do this job. On a heavy coated dog, you will need a wider-toothed comb but you must get through the outer coat and down to the undercoat.
- **Bathing:** You should bathe your dog about once per month. There will be times when your dog gets dirty between baths. Westies love to run and romp outside, so you may need to towel them off after they go in and out. You can always wash off paws and skirts without going into a full bath. Often just rinsing in plain water will do the trick. Their coats are prone to staining so it is a good idea to stay on top of baths to ensure minimal staining. Make sure you always rinse your dog well after bathing him or her. This is important to keep the soap from irritating the dog's skin.
- If your Westie has a medical condition that requires more frequent bathing it is okay to bathe your Westie more often. Westies can have allergies just like people. In this case your vet may recommend bathing more often to help reduce allergen exposure on the skin. There are special medicated shampoos that are available as well. As always consult your vet if you are having concerns about your dog's health.
- You do not want to use human shampoo on your dogs. They need shampoo specific for dogs. Westies can have sensitive skin, so you want to try a mild

shampoo first. You may have to do some trial and error to see what works best for your dog. There are whitening shampoos for dogs that help reduce yellowing of the Westie coat. You can also mix baking soda into shampoo to help rid coat of stains.

- **Westie coat staining** is often found on the muzzle and on the paws. This staining is usually from saliva. However there are instances where it could be an underlying issue. You need to consult your vet if staining appears to be from a source other than saliva.
 - **Ways to reduce staining:** Dip paws in hydrogen peroxide/ water mixture. Wipe off after a minute or so, clean paws with hydrogen peroxide and water, or use of whitening shampoos.
 - **Grooming:** Westies need regular appointments with a groomer. This is important to ensure quality of life and health of your Westie. How often your Westie needs to be groomed largely depends on owner preference and groomer recommendation.
 - **Be aware that Westies are prone to skin issues. Allergies and skin sensitivities need to be seen by a vet in order to properly care for your Westie.**
 - **Dental health is very important as well. DO NOT use human tooth paste on your dog's teeth.** They need doggie tooth paste. Human toothpaste is very dangerous for dogs. There are special doggie tooth brushes however a small human tooth brush, a rag, or your finger can be used to do regular brushing. There are also water additives that are available that help control bad breath and tartar in dogs. These are not like human mouth rinses. These can be found in the pet aisle at certain pet stores. It also is important to have regular dental cleanings and checkups at the vet for your Westie.
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These are all recommendations based upon my research and experience with Westies. You may have to tailor these methods in order to do what is best for your individual Westie.