

Osteoarthritis

● Osteoarthritis or degenerative joint disease is the most common reason for animals to lose mobility and is the number one cause of chronic pain in dogs and cats.

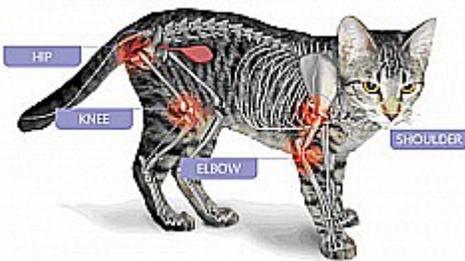
● It is characterized by a loss of cartilage within the joint followed by inflammation and scarring of the joint capsule, reduced viscosity and elasticity of the joint fluid, and ultimately bone damage. This leads to loss of movement, chronic pain and reduced quality of life.

Recognizing Pain in Your Pet:

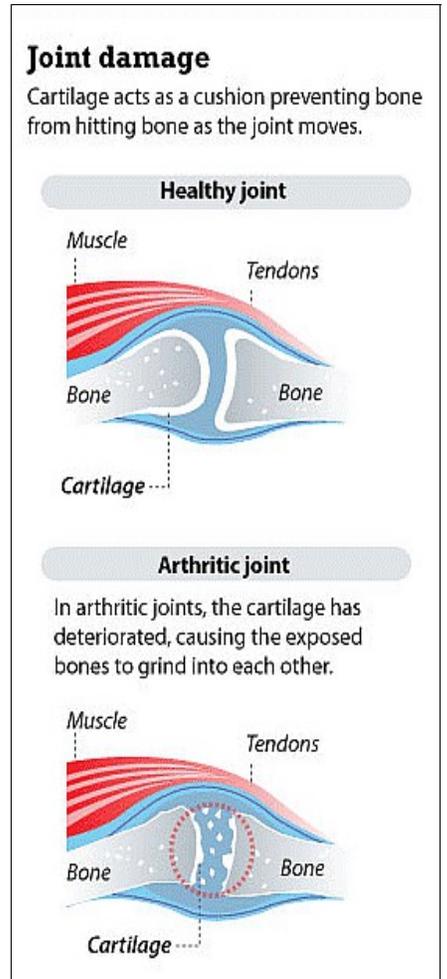
Arthritis is irreversible, but early treatment of the inflammation and pain helps control the progression of arthritis and allows our pets to stay comfortable longer.

Symptoms of pain (your pet may have one or more of these symptoms):

- ✦ **Stiffness, especially after resting**
- ✦ **Trouble rising after laying down**
- ✦ **Limping**
- ✦ **Lagging behind or tiring quickly on walks**
- ✦ **Shifting frequently or sitting/resting in an abnormal position**
- ✦ **Reluctance to go for walks**
- ✦ **Reluctance to climb stairs or jump on furniture**
- ✦ **Cries or tries to bite when handled**
- ✦ **Restlessness**



Many owners think that animals will cry out in pain when they are hurting, but instead pets seldom complain until they are in extreme discomfort. Conversely, some owners feel their pet may be faking pain in order to receive attention. Sadly this is rarely if ever the case and results in delayed treatment.



Arthritis & Joint Pain Symptoms

Arthritis is a painful condition that can affect adult dogs, and even young dog. Arthritis is common in dogs and is responsible for being one of the main causes of reoccurring pain in our beloved pets. Arthritis can be a very debilitating disease, greatly reducing a dog's quality of life and ability to enjoy the basic of daily activities.

SHOLDER:

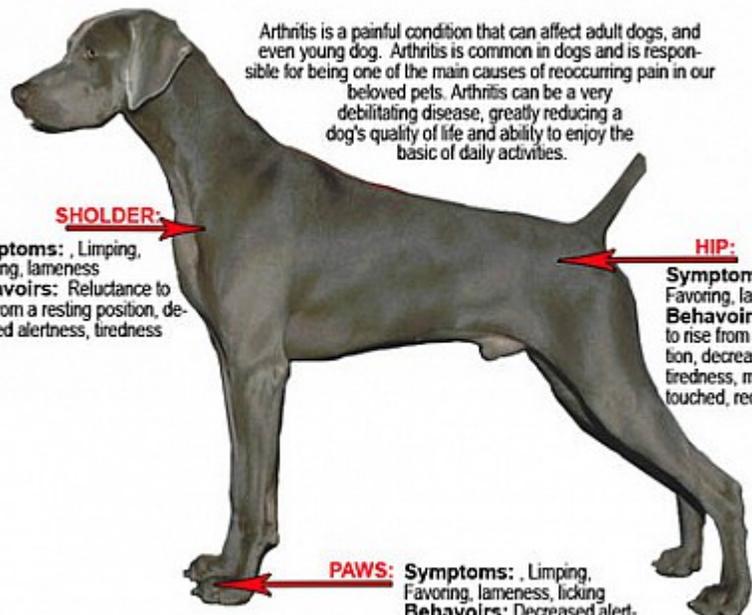
Symptoms: , Limping, Favoring, lameness
Behaviors: Reluctance to rise from a resting position, decreased alertness, tiredness

HIP:

Symptoms: , Limping, Favoring, lameness, licking
Behaviors: Reluctance to rise from a resting position, decreased alertness, tiredness, may yelp when touched, reduced appetitie

PAWS:

Symptoms: , Limping, Favoring, lameness, licking
Behaviors: Decreased alertness, tiredness



Anti-Inflammatory Medication (NSAIDs):



These drugs are fast acting and provide relief by suppressing inflammation that leads to pain and cartilage damage. Human NSAIDs tend to be toxic to our pets (especially cats) and should only be used on the advice of a veterinarian. **Never use a human medication of any kind on your pet without veterinary advice.** Safer medications have been developed for use in our pets and are the standard for arthritis management (ex. Metacam®, Deramaxx®, Rimadyl®).

NSAIDs are powerful medications that can allow our arthritic dogs and cats to play like adolescents again. They can cause side effects if not monitored closely. Your veterinarian will discuss ways that we can monitor the effects of these drugs, making them safer for long-term use.

When pain cannot be controlled with NSAIDs, additional analgesics can be added such as codeine or tramadol. Even very severe arthritis may be effectively managed by safely combining medications.

Nutriceuticals:

These are nutrients with medicinal properties and the usual rigorous testing required for effectiveness by the government is not required. All of the medications mentioned tend to be very safe and arthritis patients can benefit from their use, however they are considered a basic starting level for joint care.



© *Glucosamine and Chondroitin Sulfate:*

These medications contain the building blocks needed to repair damaged cartilage. It is thought that these products may have some anti-inflammatory component as well. They take up to two months to build up in adequate amounts in the body. *Glucosamine is thought to be best absorbed in the hydrochloride (HCl) form in pets.* Although many foods are fortified with glucosamine they often do not provide therapeutic levels, so oral supplements are often the best choice. Our clinic stocks several forms of these supplements.

© *Omega-3 Fatty Acids:*

Cold water fish oils have been found to have anti-inflammatory properties which are helpful to combat arthritis. These products can take at least a month to build up to effective levels. Please note that flax oil is not readily converted to an effective form by our dogs and cats as it is in people, so fish oils are the best choice. Liquid and capsule forms are available.

© *Specialty Diets:*

Several veterinary prescription diets are available which have been clinically proven to reduce pain and improve mobility for arthritic pets (**ex. Mobility Support®, j/d®**). These contain different nutriceuticals including omega, glucosamine and even green-lipped muscle extract—another supplement which can help. Sometimes the right food can be excellent medicine!



Cold weather

Cold, damp weather can be especially hard on arthritic pets. The cold can leave their joints extremely stiff and tender.

- Shorten the usual exercise times if your pet is having difficulty exercising
- Make sure they have a thick, soft bed in a warm room for the chilly nights
- Modify their environment to make it easier for them to get around

Weight control:



Weight control is an important part of managing arthritis. Keeping your pets weight in the lean range means less weight to carry around and takes a significant burden off of the joints. If you would like more information regarding weight control please discuss this with your veterinarian.



This is not a comprehensive list of treatment for arthritis. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your pet's health management please do not hesitate to contact your veterinarian. Our goal is to improve your pet's quality of life.