



ARTHRITIS IN PETS

Although there are many types of arthritis in pets as well as people, the most common is osteoarthritis—the wearing down of cartilage and loss of synovial fluid that lubricates the joint. This degenerative process creates bone rubbing on bone, causing pain and loss of mobility. It is most commonly caused by aging, but some diseases and infections also can cause arthritis and degenerative joint disease. Though arthritis can affect both dogs and cats, it is much more common in dogs.

SIGNS OF ARTHRITIS

- Joint pain or swelling
- Loss of movement, stiffness, difficulty getting up, or, in cats, jumping
- Reluctance to go up and down stairs
- Limping
- Pain or resistance to touching from people
- Personality changes and depression
- Vocalization in dogs; cats seldom cry when in pain

DIAGNOSIS

Your veterinarian will perform a physical exam, manipulation of the joints and probably some radiographs (X-rays) and blood work. These tools help the doctor diagnosis the exact condition and severity. He will then discuss various treatments options that are the best for your pet.

TREATMENT OPTIONS

Most medications are for pain control, not actual treatment of arthritis. The most common drugs used are Rimadyl, Adequan, and Palaprin. They are licensed for use in dogs, but not cats. All can have side effects and their use must be monitored by your veterinarian. Early diagnosis and treatment can help prevent further joint damage, or at least slow the process.

Weight control is also important. Overweight pets put more stress and strain on affected joints, particularly the back and hips in dogs, and shoulders and front legs in cats. Moderate, low-impact exercising like walking not only burns calories, but will help keep joints mobile.

Glucosamine supplements can help simulate cells to produce synovial fluid and help prevent cartilage deterioration.

Surgery is sometimes an option for dogs for severely degenerated hip joints. Heat therapy, especially loved by cats, can help ease pain.