



Meeting your pet's needs

Arthritis is a common geriatric disease in all our pets with larger breed dogs disproportionately affected. Early intervention to manage arthritis will result by recognising the subtle behavioural changes our pets show that are a result of arthritis.

Arthritis is a degenerative disease and needs to be managed. Managing arthritis includes slowing the rate of joint damage, improved relief of pain, and thus better use and function of joints for animals. Arthritis management has been shown to dramatically improve their quality of life.

Current treatment methods and lifestyle advice available from your vet will provide the best opportunity for a great life. No animal need live with any discomfort or reduced quality of life as a consequence of arthritis.

Your veterinarian is the trusted professional to meet your pet's needs. We trust that the information contained within this leaflet will help you work with your vet to identify and develop a plan to manage arthritis in your pet.

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Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs, or NSAIDs, are a common treatment for arthritis. They provide pain relief, anti-inflammatory effect and protection from further deterioration of joints.

Carefully read and follow the prescription for your pet. As with all medications, side effects can occur. If your pet becomes unwell or you suspect your pet is having problems with a medication, STOP the medication and CONTACT your veterinarian.

The most commonly seen side effect of NSAID use is a mild softening of your pet's stools. Loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhoea or other gastrointestinal signs may occasionally be observed.

Importance of the revisit

Animals afflicted by arthritis have good and bad days. To maximise the benefit of NSAID medications for your pet, discuss their treatment plan with your veterinarian. Revisits and blood tests are needed to monitor both efficacy and safety for your pet.

Lifestyle and medication needs may change over time. Your vet will consider the many options that contribute to arthritis management and change treatment accordingly. This ensures your pet receives the best ongoing care possible.

Your revisit appointment time is:

Arthritis & Your Pet




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Symptoms in Dogs

Altered behaviours as a result of arthritis are initially subtle but develop in dogs as the condition progresses. We become accustomed to seeing these behaviours and accept them as being a normal part of the aging process rather than as a result of arthritis.

Ask yourself, is your dog:

Stiff

Less active

Irritable

Unable to jump up

Limping

Lagging behind on walks

Losing muscle over the legs



The behaviours and symptoms listed above are signs related to arthritis. If you recognise any of these behaviours begin with a visit to your vet to allow diagnosis and begin management.

Understanding Arthritis

How it affects your pet

Arthritis, or osteoarthritis, is inflammation of the bones, cartilage surfaces and ligaments of joints. There is degeneration of the joint surfaces and loss of joint fluid that results in a variable level of pain or discomfort. Arthritis will progress and the pain associated with arthritis will:

- ▶ Require lifestyle alterations.
- ▶ Prevent your pet from being active.
- ▶ Reduce and interfere with the quality time you spend with your pet.
- ▶ Change the way your pet walks, runs and bears weight.

Managing arthritis proactively will give your pet a better quality of life whilst also helping protect their joints from ongoing deterioration!

The importance of a veterinary visit

Your local vet will:

- ▶ Diagnose the source of your pet's symptoms.
- ▶ Provide pain relief to ensure your animal is comfortable.
- ▶ Help protect against the progression of disease.
- ▶ Give advice on making your house comfortable for your pet – a warm bed, improved accessibility for essentials like food and litter trays!
- ▶ Give advice on rest, exercise and physiotherapy for your pet.
- ▶ Help you manage your pet's weight. Often the single most important long term measure you can change to assist arthritis management.

Early intervention provides your pet the best outcome. If your pet is showing any of the signs, schedule an appointment with your vet!

Symptoms in Cats

Arthritis in cats is very subtle, and behavioural symptoms occur more commonly than physical. As arthritis progresses your cat will withdraw from their normal day to day activities.

Ask yourself, is your cat:

Reluctant to play

Resting more

Unable to jump up

Stiff or limping

Irritable

Not grooming properly



The behaviours and symptoms listed above are signs related to arthritis. Cats have a sedentary lifestyle, especially when they get older, making early recognition of arthritis difficult. Maintain regular visits to your vet for examination as an important step towards early diagnosis.