



ARTHRITIS AND RECOMMENDED TREATMENTS

About 20% of all dogs and cats in the U.S. suffer from arthritis. This disease develops gradually over time, causing your dog or cat pain and often preventing him from performing even the simplest of movements.

Dogs and cats suffering from arthritis can show one or more of the following signs:

- Stiffness getting up or lying down
- Sluggishness or tiredness
- Low activity, changes in gait
- Reluctance to perform usual activities—walk, jump, run, climb stairs, or play
- Lag behind on walks
- Reluctance to extend rear legs
- Soreness/pain
- Muscle atrophy (loss of muscle mass)
- Personality or behavioral changes

Arthritis is inflammation that occurs in your pet's joints. A healthy joint consists of cartilage that covers and protects the ends of the bones in a joint. The cartilage has no nerves; when it touches the cartilage of another bone, the dog or cat feels no pain. However, arthritis causes the cartilage to wear away. This exposes the bone, which does have many nerves. So when two bones touch each other, your dog or cat feels pain. This pain can greatly affect your pet's quality of life.

Arthritis can be managed much more successfully when it is diagnosed and treated early in the process. Arthritis is best treated with weight loss, exercise, diet, and multi-modal therapy, meaning multiple medications and/or treatments. Medications can include many over-the-counter supplements, conventional medications, herbal formulations, and alternative treatments such as acupuncture and laser therapy.

Weight Loss: Something to think about before including medical treatment involves weight loss. Over 50% of dogs and cats in the United States are overweight. Overweight pets are at an increased risk for several diseases, have a decreased life expectancy, and often experience chronic pain due to strain on their joints. Weight loss is one of the best things you can do to reduce arthritis in your pet.

Exercise: Just because a pet has arthritis does not mean they should stop all exercise. Gentle exercise such as short walks and supervised swimming can help to keep joints mobile. It is important to let your pet determine how far to walk—do not push them if they are painful.

Diets: Diets that contain joint supplements such as glucosamine, chondroitin sulfate and fish oil (omega 3 and 6) are also helpful in treating arthritis. Some examples of joint diets available include Hill's j/d and Purina JM.



MON
7:30AM - 6:00PM
TUE
7:30AM - 7:00PM

WED
7:30AM - 6:00PM
THU
7:30AM - 6:00PM

FRI
7:30AM - 6:00PM
SAT
8:00AM - 1:00PM

Supplements

Vitamin C can be obtained over-the-counter. It works as an anti-oxidant that helps to remove free radicals (toxic substances) from the joints and muscle. Large dogs should receive 500mg orally once daily and small dogs and cats should receive 250mg orally once daily.

Vitamin E is another anti-oxidant that is available over-the-counter. Large dogs should receive 400IU once daily and small dogs and cats should receive 200IU once daily.

Fish Oil is another free-radical scavenger that helps with joints, heart, hair coat, and the immune system. It works best when combined with vitamins C and E. It is best to obtain fatty acid supplements from reputable pet companies.

Glucosamine, MSM, Chondroitin Sulfate - These substances are naturally found in the joints and help to maintain joint health. They not only help with pain, but also strengthen joints. They help to prevent arthritis, prolong the time until arthritis starts, and can even reverse some arthritis. They are usually found as a combination product. These are not only recommended when dogs and cats have arthritis, but also before arthritis starts. For example, when dogs and cats have structural disease and therefore an early need for joint support. It is best to obtain these from reputable pet companies and not products made for humans. Examples of these products are Glycoflex and Cosequin/Dasuquin. Joint diets such as Hill's J/D and Purina JM incorporate these supplements into the food that your pet eats. For some dogs and cats, these diets may work better than the combination joint supplements. However, some pets require the extra supplements in addition to the diet.

Medications

The following medications should only be given to your pet on the advice of a veterinarian. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive.

Always make sure to tell your veterinarian all other medications that you are giving to your pet before giving any of these medications.

Adequan is an injectable Polysulfated Glycosaminoglycan (PSGAG) used in dogs. It can also be used off-label in cats. Glycosaminoglycans are normally found in joints. Adequan is a semi-synthetic glycosaminoglycan and is used to aid in treatment and prevention of arthritis and inflammation. It also inhibits cartilage damage, improves lubrication of the joint, blocks catalytic enzymes, increases hyaluronic acid production, and stimulates matrix production in the joint. It is given as an injection.

Aspirin (acetylsalicylic acid) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory agent used to treat mild to moderate pain, to reduce inflammation and to reduce fever. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful. Aspirin can be toxic to cats. Do NOT give aspirin to cats unless directed to do so by a veterinarian.



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Buprenex (buprenorphine) is an analgesic (pain relieving medicine) used for mild to moderate pain in small animals. It is also often used post-operatively. In cats, it can be administered buccally (inside the cheek), meaning that it does not need to be swallowed. Buprenex can be combined with some analgesic medications. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful.



Carprofen (Rimadyl) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication used to relieve pain and inflammation in dogs. It is also often used post-operatively. Carprofen is used in the treatment of pain either for short term or long term use. Potential candidates for long-term use of carprofen should have a complete physical examination, blood work to establish baseline biochemical values, and recheck testing two to four weeks after starting carprofen. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful. Do NOT give to cats.

Deracoxib (Deramaxx) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication generally used to control arthritis pain in dogs. It is also often used post-operatively. It can be used in the treatment of pain either for short term or long term use. Potential candidates for long-term use of deracoxib should have a complete physical examination, blood work to establish baseline biochemical values, and recheck testing two to four weeks after starting deracoxib. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful. Do NOT give to cats.

Fentanyl (Duragesic Patch) provides continuous pain relief to dogs and cats with on-going pain. This medication is useful after surgery, with cancer pain, and as an adjunct to other medications for chronic pain.

Firocoxib (Previcox) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication generally used to control arthritis pain in dogs. It is also often used as post-operatively. It can be used in the treatment of pain either for short term or long term use. Potential candidates for long-term use of firocoxib should have a complete physical examination, blood work to establish baseline biochemical values, and recheck testing two to four weeks after starting firocoxib. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful. Do NOT give to cats.

Gabapentin (Neurontin) is an adjunctive medication used in the treatment of chronic pain, neuropathic pain, or cancer pain in dogs and cats. It can also be used for epilepsy (seizures).

Meloxicam (Metacam) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication generally used to control arthritis pain in dogs. It is also often used post-operatively. Meloxicam is generally given to control arthritis pain in dogs though it can be given for many other painful conditions. It is often used as an analgesic in conjunction with surgery. It is approved in cats as an injectable form for post-surgical pain and inflammation. The oral form is not approved for cats in the United States, although it is approved in Europe and many specialists use the oral form for cats with arthritis. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful.

Prednisone/Prednisolone are glucocorticoids (steroids). They are the most broad spectrum anti-inflammatory medications available. This type of medication is used to relieve inflammation, decrease swelling, and supportive care. This medication can be used in both cats and dogs. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful.

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Robenacoxib (Onsior) is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication generally used to control arthritis pain in cats. It is generally given to control arthritis pain in cats though it can be given for many other painful conditions. It is indicated for post-operative pain and inflammation due to surgery. It provides twenty-four hours of pain relief with once daily administration. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful.

Tramadol is an opiate agonist useful for analgesia without being addictive. It is most commonly used as an adjunctive medication for pain control and can be used in both dogs and cats. Sedation is a common side effect. It is important to use pills with just Tramadol in them. Some combination pills for people contain ingredients that are toxic to dogs and cats. Dosage is very important as too much of this product can be harmful.

It is very important that human medications not be given to your pets unless advised by your veterinarian. Not all NSAIDS (Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs) and steroids are the same. Dosage may also be different in dogs and cats as compared to people.

Alternative Means of Pain Control

These are herbal formulations and treatments that can not only be used for arthritis pain, but also inflammation, muscle problems, and many other disease conditions.

Herbal Formulations can consist of single herbs, many of which can be found over-the-counter, and formulations consisting of many herbal combinations. While the majority of these herbs are safe, they should not be used unless directed by your veterinarian. Herbs are often used as an adjunct to conventional medications used for inflammation and pain relief. They may also be used when other medications have unwanted side effects, are too expensive, or the owners want to try only natural medications.

Acupuncture is the stimulation of specific points on the body that have the ability to alter various biochemical and physiologic conditions to achieve desired effects such as relief of bone and joint pain, decrease inflammation and muscle spasms, increase endorphins, and increased circulation. It works primarily via the central nervous system, affecting the musculoskeletal, hormonal, and cardiovascular systems. Although most commonly used for inflammation and pain control, acupuncture can be used to treat many other medical conditions. It has been used successfully for nearly 4000 years and is still the treatment of choice for one-quarter of the world's population. Acupuncture can be used by itself or as an adjunct with other treatment modalities.

Therapy Laser is an acronym that stands for Light Amplification by the Stimulated Emission of Radiation. Laser therapy, or "photobiomodulation", is the use of specific wavelengths of light (red and near-infrared) to create therapeutic effects. These effects include improved healing time, pain reduction, increased circulation, and decreased swelling. Therapeutic laser therapy can be used for osteoarthritis and joint pain, post-surgical and dental pain, ligament and muscle sprains, chronic pain and lameness, fractures, neuropathies, neck and back pain, intervertebral disk disease (IVDD), hip dysplasia, and any conditions that acupuncture is used for, to name a few. It is extremely well-tolerated by pets and is non-painful. It is often used with other forms of therapy, including physical therapy, acupuncture, chiropractic adjustments, massage, and with conventional medications and herbal formulations.



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