

Arthritis in pets is similar to osteoarthritis in people, affected joints becoming inflamed and painful. This may result in stiffness or a reluctance to use the joint.

Arthritis is more common in older pets, and usually has a gradual onset and may therefore go unrecognised during the early stages. It can also occur earlier in life, especially if a joint has suffered a traumatic injury.

Signs of Arthritis

- Difficulty jumping into the car
- Reduced stamina
- No enthusiasm for exercise
- Reluctance to get up after lying down
- Difficulty with stairs
- Tiredness earlier on walks
- Lameness
- Stiffness, especially in the morning or after exercise
- Behavioural changes

Further investigations of arthritis, such as x-rays, may be suggested. A weight loss program may be advised if your dog or cat is carrying extra weight as this may make the effects of arthritis worse.

Therapy with one or more of the following may be suggested:

- **Diet (Hill's j/d):**

This diet interrupts the genetic signal that stimulates the enzyme that causes cartilage damage and so eases pain and slows the progression of arthritis in dogs and cats.

- **Non-steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs):**

eg: Metacam, Rimadyl, Zubrin. This class of drug reduces inflammation of the joints and relieves pain, making the animal feel more comfortable and willing to move the joints. Consequently, the animal is happier to exercise, which helps to keep the joints mobile and builds up muscle which may otherwise become wasted. With all NSAIDs there is a risk that some pets may suffer side effects following administration and there are situations where drug therapy with NSAIDs may not be appropriate if an animal has another concurrent illness.

- **Nutraceutical Products:**

Products containing glucosamine HCl, chondroitin sulphate and other products designed to help repair and protect the joints, eg: Synoquin, Cortaflex, Easiflex, Glycoflex. Glucosamine HCl is the major building block for the synthesis of new glycosaminoglycans, or GAGs, which are essential for healthy cartilage in joints. Chondroitin sulphate is the main GAG found in cartilage and is essential for the shock absorbing effects of cartilage. Taking these nutraceutical products helps to maintain the supply of building blocks for cartilage and slow the cycle of joint degeneration. GAGs can also be administered in the form of an injection.

- **Green Lipped Mussel Extract:**

An extract derived from the green lipped mussel, which has been shown to have anti-inflammatory and pain relieving effects, is available to use alone, can be found within some diet foods or in combination with nutraceutical products, eg: Glycoflex.

- **Acupuncture:**

Acupuncture involves the positioning of fine acupuncture needles along meridians or energy channels running around the body. The needles help to reduce muscle spasm and also stimulate the release of endorphins, the body's natural pain relief hormones, to help the animal feel pain free.

- **Steroids:**

Corticosteroids produce an anti-inflammatory effect which will help to reduce pain and inflammation in joints. As with the non-steroidal anti-inflammatories, there can be a risk that some pets may suffer side effects and there are situations where these drugs may not be appropriate if an animal has other complicating problems.

- **Hydrotherapy:**

Swimming in water helps to exercise muscles without weight bearing and also to improve fitness. Hydrotherapy can be particularly useful post surgery and in animals where weight bearing may make injuries or joint problems worse. The water in hydrotherapy pools is kept at an optimum temperature to maintain blood flow and supply to muscles.

- **Physiotherapy:**

Physiotherapy is described as the use of physical techniques for the treatment of injuries and movement dysfunction.

Physiotherapy encompasses many different techniques, including both the skilled use of the physiotherapist's hands and the use of modern therapeutic modalities, which may include:

- Soft tissue mobilisation
- Joint mobilisation
- Acupressure
- Hydrotherapy
- Electrotherapy
- Thermotherapy
- Gait reeducation and realignment
- Pain relief and muscle reeducation
- Strengthening, stretching and proprioceptive exercises

Physiotherapy appointments are available at the practice - please contact reception for an appointment.

- **Other Options:**

Include the use of copper or magnetic collars, chiropractics or homoeopathy.

Please do not hesitate to speak to any of the vets at the practice to discuss arthritis treatments for your pet.



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Quick Reference Guide



And Its Management

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