

Arthritis

With our pets living longer we are seeing an increase in the prevalence of arthritis in our senior pets. Arthritis is one of the most common sources of chronic pain in our pets. Arthritis affects one out of five adult dogs over 50 pounds and we are starting to see an increase in the number of cats that are showing signs of arthritic changes.

Arthritis is the inflammation of a joint. It can occur in any joint, including the spine and jaw. Arthritis can also cause fever and redness of the skin over the joint. Polyarthritis is inflammation of several joints at the same time and is often associated with complex internal diseases. Causes of arthritis include:

- ✓ Aging
- ✓ Inherited arthritis
- ✓ Infection
- ✓ Injury
- ✓ Blood disease
- ✓ Allergic or immune-mediated diseases
- ✓ Cancer

Signs of arthritis in our pets include:

- Stiff movements
- Limping or favoring a limb
- Joint swelling
- A grating sensation during joint movement
- Slow or difficult time getting up
- Reluctance to jump
- Acting as if certain positions are painful

To determine if your pet is experiencing arthritic changes your veterinarian will want to do a physical exam of your pet. They may want to also take x-rays to determine the extent of the arthritic changes and do bloodwork to ensure that your pet is healthy otherwise. Follow-up examinations are required during treatment to evaluate the response to the therapy. Arthritis is usually a controllable rather than curable disease and therapy is designed to minimize discomfort and delay or prevent progression of the disease.

The treatment for arthritis pain includes proper diet and nutrition, regular moderate exercise and medications for pain relief. Good nutrition is important to provide vitamins and minerals needed for optimal joint health. Keeping your pet at their ideal weight is very important because extra weight can stress the joints leading to increased discomfort. Extra weight is typically associated with increased fat tissue which produces more inflammatory factors that destroys joint tissue. Moderate exercise such as walking helps to keep their joints flexible. A regular program of a day of exercise followed by a day of rest works best for arthritic animals.

There are several different types of medications available to treat arthritis. Pets with mild to severe arthritis can benefit from the joint supplements chondroitin sulfate and glucosamine. Chondroitin and glucosamine help to provide nutrients for the joint cartilage which leads to improved mobility and flexibility. Another class of medications that can help with pain are NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) such as aspirin and carprofen (Rimadyl®). In some cases injectable anti-inflammatory medications such as Adequan® provides more pain relief. In cases of spinal arthritis steroidal drugs such as Prednisone may give the best pain relief. Some animals may benefit from a diet such as Science Diet J/d food which is designed to help with joint health. Your veterinarian may develop a treatment plan that includes several different types of therapies to achieve the best results for your pet.



No matter which combination of treatments your pet receives it is important to follow the instructions carefully and to have follow-up examinations and tests done.

You may also want to consider ways to make your pet's home environment more comfortable for them by:

- Providing soft supportive bedding
- Using ramps to help them get into and out of beds and cars
- Putting down carpeting and securing rugs to help them gain traction when getting up and walking
- Using a sling to offer more support when going up and down steps

Please contact your veterinarian if:

- Your pet's discomfort or lameness increases
- Your pet develops new signs
- Your pet is reluctant to eat or seems unusually thirsty
- There is swelling or drainage from a joint



Your pet can lead a fairly normal life while having arthritis with a little help. Treating arthritis in your pets can allow more happy years for you and your pet.

For information about arthritis feel free to call us at (920) 668-6212 or email us at info@cgvet.com.