

# Osteoarthritis

Arthritis, or osteoarthritis (OA), is a chronic and progressive joint disease that affects 80% of dogs over the age of 7. This degenerative condition causes loss of joint cartilage, leading to other changes in their bones and causing pain, inflammation and difficulty using the affected limb.

OA is not just a disease that occurs in senior dogs and can develop at any age, especially in dogs with contributing factors, such as obesity or other orthopaedic conditions.

While there is no cure for OA, there are several strategies for slowing its progression, managing mobility and minimizing pain. Many factors contribute to the development of OA. Often there is more than one cause, but in some cases, there may also be no obvious underlying cause. Several orthopaedic diseases may lead to the development of OA by causing repetitive injury to the joint cartilage - including hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, patella luxation, cranial cruciate ligament damage, previous fractures, repetitive high-impact activities and more.

Obesity contributes significantly to the development of OA due to the added force placed on joints. Fat cells also produce inflammatory mediators, which worsens the progression of OA.

## Clinical signs:

The signs of OA may vary from mild to severe based on the chronicity and number of joints affected.

Signs may include any of the following:

- Pain & Stiffness
- Lameness or a change in gait
- Decrease in activity or reluctance to walk, run or exercise
- Difficulty navigating stairs or jumping on couches
- Difficulty getting up from lying down
- Muscle wasting
- Sudden changes in behaviour, such as irritability or aggression

## Diagnosis:

OA is diagnosed after a physical exam, where your veterinarian will observe your dog's gait and posture, and feel for any abnormal changes to the joints or signs of pain.

X-rays may be performed to further assess the joint or bony changes, and to help diagnose any underlying orthopaedic conditions.

In some cases, more advanced imaging may be performed to better evaluate the cartilage and other soft tissue structures surrounding the bone that do not show up on X-rays. To examine those areas, your veterinarian will schedule an arthroscopy, CT or MRI.

**Treatment** - The goal of treatment is to minimize pain, slow the progression of damage, and maintain or develop muscle mass, this can be achieved with a combination of therapies, which may include:

- Weight control
- Low-impact activities, such as leash walks or swimming
- Hydrotherapy
- Acupuncture
- Use of non-slip rugs and ramps to get on beds, couches or cars
- Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory (NSAIDS)
- Lazer Therapy
- Joint Supplements
- Surgery
- Monoclonal Antibodies

Please note that all long-term medications will require regular monitoring by the veterinary surgeon. This is crucial to ensure patient safety, medication and dosage optimization and detect and manage potential side effects. The regularity of these checks will be based upon the severity of illness, medication side effects, stability of patient condition and regulations placed upon the veterinary practice by law via regulatory governing bodies.



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