



## HELPING OLD DOGS WITH ARTHRITIS and JOINT PAIN

One of the hardest things as a pet owner is watching an old, arthritic dog struggling to get up and get moving after lying down for a while. And worse, the ritual of getting up slowly and painfully is played over and over several times each day, making it even harder for us to bear.

Arthritis results as the cartilage surface of joints (knees, hips, etc) gets thinner and the cartilage cells die. These dying cells release enzymes that cause inflammation of the joint, which creates pain. As the cartilage thins, the bone that lies beneath the cartilage may deteriorate. And in some cases, the formation of small deposits of bone in the joints can add significantly to pain and discomfort. By this point, limping and /or continuous pain and discomfort are a way of life for these poor pets. Fortunately, we have a variety of ways to help your pet, and optimally a combination of practices can offer great benefit to them.

Just as with people, we have a variety of effective pain relievers for pets. The most commonly prescribed medications for pets (and people, too) are called NSAIDs ~ Non-Steroid Anti-Inflammatory Drugs. While they can be very helpful, be aware that they come with precautions ... both in pets *and* people.

There are several NSAIDs for both dogs and cats, but all are by prescription only. Because we are not full-service, we do not prescribe any of these medications at Carolina Value Pet Care since their use must be monitored with periodic blood tests to make sure they are not causing liver or kidney problems. Still, these NSAIDs have helped millions of dogs lead more comfortable lives. You may recognize some of these medications: **Rimadyl** (Carprofen ~ available as Novox in generic forms), **Deramaxx** (Deracoxib), **Previcox** (Firocoxib), **Metacam** (Meloxicam ~ available for **Cats**, too), and **EtoGesic** (Etodolac). A new medication **Galliprant** (Grapiprant) was recently introduced and it is a welcome addition since it is shown to be safer than other NSAIDs as it is much less likely to cause intestinal, liver or kidney problems, and it doesn't require regular blood tests to monitor.

An injectable medication **Adequan** has proven to be extremely effective with very few side-effects. To achieve desired results, it requires 6 injections over the first 3 weeks, then injections about once a month or so. It is truly a great product, but it may be a little pricey for some pet owners.

Prescription pain medications such as **Tramadol**, **Gabapentin** and **Amantadine** may not relieve inflammation, but they may help with pain and discomfort.

Besides prescription medications, there are a number of non-prescription ways to help an arthritic pet.

**MOVOFLEX:** One of my favorite recommendations is Movoflex, a sugar-free and gluten-free chewable tablet that blends 5 unique ingredients to support joint mobility and flexibility and overall joint health. While it may take a few weeks to see visible improvement, MOVOFLEX has proven to be extremely effective, even in dogs that are severely arthritic. **We have it available at Carolina Value Pet Care, and I highly encourage trying it. A container provides a 2 month supply.**

**Glucosamine + Chondroitin + MSM** may help many dogs by providing nutritional support to protect the cartilage and slowing down the enzymes that break down cartilage. As a guideline, dogs can be given 500mg Glucosamine + 400 mg Chondroitin for every 25 lbs of body weight for 4-6 weeks, then reduce the amount by half.

**Omega-3 Fatty Acids** in the form of **Fish Oils:** May be helpful when given at high doses. The minimum dose is 60mg to 75mg per pound of body weight ... given daily. To properly dose, look at the label on the bottle and combine (add) the mg of EPA+DHA. Ex: A 50 lb dog would need ~3000mg - 4000mg of combined EPA + DHA each day.

**Buffered Aspirin:** I am willing to try Aspirin, if used sparingly. The recommendation is 1 Baby Aspirin (81mg) for each 15 lbs of body weight, given every other day as needed. An Adult Buffered Aspirin (325mg) is good for a 60 lb dog.

**Weight Loss:** If your pet is overweight, please read my handout entitled "How To Help Your Dog and Cat Lose Weight" for my thoughts, ideas and simple strategies for **shedding unwanted pounds** from your pet. Losing extra weight can take an enormous burden off the painful, creaky joints of older pets, or those dogs that have had joint injuries.

**Stem Cells & PEMF:** Two newer procedures that I encourage pet owners to consider are: 1) **Stem Cell Therapy** and 2) **PEMF** treatment. **Adult** (not embryonic or fetal) **Stem Cell Therapy uses cells extracted from a pet's own fat tissue**. This very effective therapy can actually be far more affordable (and less invasive and less painful) than **joint replacement surgery**. **PEMF (Pulsed ElectroMagnetic Field Therapy)** is a totally painless method of directing powerful, pulsed energy waves towards damaged areas of the body. Great results have been seen in pets and horses and people.

**Physical therapy** can be extremely beneficial. There are veterinarians who offer physical therapy / rehab for those patients that have had bone and joint surgery, as well as for older, arthritic pets. **Acupuncture** and/or **Massage Therapy** have proven to be beneficial for many pets. **Laser therapy** for arthritis is also available. While **joint replacement surgery** may be an option with many pets, but it can be very expensive, with the need for rehabilitation.

A very simple and practical measure is to provide your arthritic pet with a **well-padded bed**. And **heated pet beds** can be even more helpful and comfortable, especially in the winter months. Since slick floors and surfaces can be a real challenge for arthritic pets, use **non-skid rugs and carpets**. Stairs can be really tricky as well, so building a **ramp** (if practical), or putting carpet on the stairs, or even carrying your old friend up and down steps can help considerably.

There are so-called 'natural' (whatever that means ... don't be fooled by this marketing buzzword !) pain relief medications on the market. In general, they are useless, but if you have good results with a product, let us know.

I hope you now realize you have lots of choices to consider. And I believe it's especially helpful to combine strategies for even better results. Give your old dog the relief from pain that she / he deserves ! [www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com](http://www.CarolinaValuePetCare.com) Aug2020