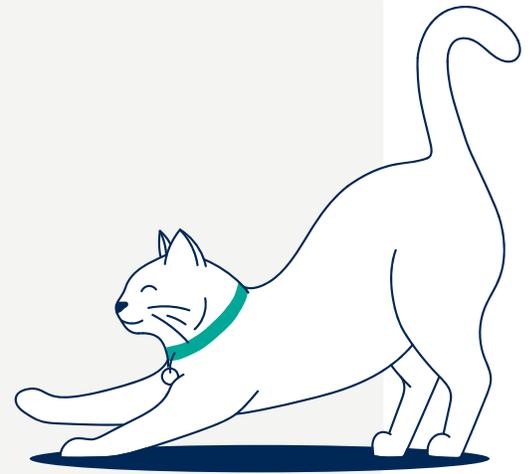


# A Pet Parent's Guide to Arthritis in Cats

Arthritis (also called degenerative joint disease or osteoarthritis) is a chronic and painful condition that can affect cats and usually takes years to develop.

Arthritis is a very common condition in pet cats. It causes the cartilage that normally lines and cushions the joints to break down, allowing bones to rub together. These bones may splinter and form shards that poke into the joint. This leads to swelling, inflammation, and pain in the joints.

Let's look at everything you need to know about arthritis—and how you can help your furry family member.



## What Are the Symptoms of Arthritis in Cats?

Cats can be good at hiding pain and illness, so some pets may not show any signs. However, if your pet does show signs of arthritis, you may notice:

- Decreased energy or agility
- Failure or difficulty to jump up or down
- Hesitancy to play
- Lack of grooming, an unkempt appearance
- Change in posture
- Going to the bathroom outside of the litter box

**Arthritis is a gradual disease, so these symptoms will usually happen over time, not overnight.**

## What Causes Arthritis in Cats?

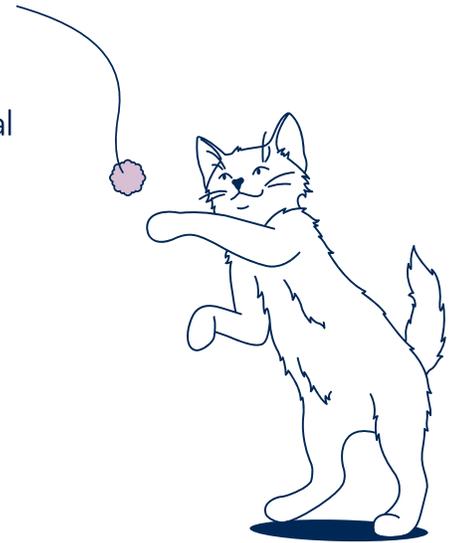
Sometimes arthritis may not have a root cause—though genetics in aging cats typically plays a role. Arthritis can also happen because of an injury or disease, like a ligament tear Lyme disease.



## How Is Cat Arthritis Diagnosed?

To determine if a cat has arthritis, your vet will likely perform a physical exam, recommend an X-ray and perform blood work. Additional testing (like a CT scan, MRI, or arthroscopy) may be needed.

To determine how much pain a cat is in, vets will sometimes suggest a trial of pain medications.



## How Is Arthritis Treated? How Can I Help My Cat?

Arthritis is managed, since it can't be reversed or cured. However, treatments can slow its progression and keep your cat comfortable, active, and happy.

Your vet will choose and prescribe a pain medication that's best for your specific cat. They may also recommend a supplement, like omega-3 fatty acids, Dasuquin, or Cosequin.

Your cat may also benefit from supportive care, such as:

- Laser therapy
- Acupuncture
- Stem cell therapy
- Warm/cold compresses
- Physical therapy
- Light exercise (gentle walks and easy play sessions with a toy cat wand)
- Massage
- Surgery

Because obesity is linked to arthritis, it's best to keep your cat lean and healthy.

If your cat is already overweight, introduce a weight loss program for them with your vet's approval and guidance.

To make your cat's environment more comfortable and easier to navigate, implement a few changes around your house. Provide ramps, low-sided litter boxes, and soft beds for your furry family member.

If you have any concerns about your cat's progressing arthritis, speak with your veterinarian.