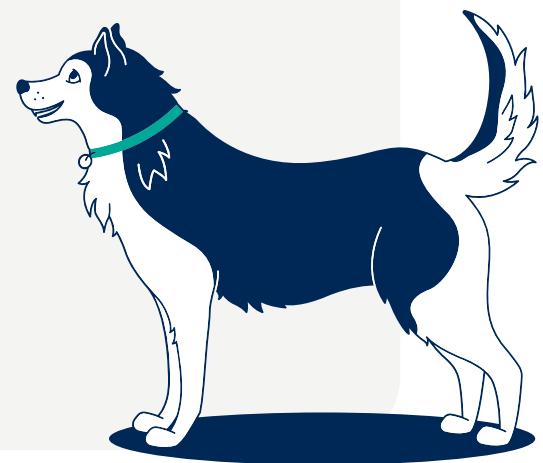


A Pet Parent's Guide to Arthritis in Dogs

Arthritis (also called degenerative joint disease or osteoarthritis) is a very common chronic and painful condition that can affect dogs and usually takes years to develop. The condition causes the cartilage that normally lines and cushions 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 pup.



What Are the Symptoms of Arthritis in Dogs?

Pet parents will usually notice signs of arthritis in dogs. Symptoms typically include:

- Decreased willingness to play and exercise, as well as decreased overall activity
- Stiffness or lameness, especially when getting up from sitting or when lying down
- A change in posture or gait
- Limping
- Shifting legs when they walk
- Swollen joints

What Causes Arthritis in Dogs?

Sometimes arthritis may not have a root cause—though aging usually plays a role. Arthritis can also happen because of an injury, like a ligament tear or hip dysplasia.



How Is Dog Arthritis Diagnosed?

To determine if a dog has arthritis, your vet will most 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.



How Is Arthritis Treated? How Can I Help My Dog?

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

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

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

- Laser therapy
- Acupuncture
- Applying warm or cold compresses
- Physical therapy
- Light exercise (short, gentle walks and easy play sessions with a toy)
- Massage or stretching
- Swimming or using a water treadmill
- Surgery

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

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

To make your pup's environment more comfortable and easier to navigate, implement a few changes around your house such as providing ramps, dog stairs, and soft beds to help keep their joints comfortable.

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