



What is Arthritis? Arthritis is wearing of the joints over time. It is a common problem in older pets, especially large breed dogs. Any joint can be affected with arthritis, but the most common joints include the hips, knees, shoulders, wrists, elbows, and the back. While we cannot cure this problem, there are many things we can do to help your pet feel more comfortable.

What signs will I see in my pet? The early signs include less activity, slow to jump, stiffness, and panting. Some pets may limp, whine, or shake. In cats, you may notice less movement, or urine outside of the box if having to go down or upstairs to use the box.

How can I help my pet? Unfortunately, arthritis in pets, as in humans, cannot be cured. The treatment includes weight, pain management, and regular activity. A combination of medications and supplements are specific to each pet and their needs.

- **Maintaining proper weight** is the most important thing you can do for your pet to slow down arthritis and lessen pain. Pets can maintain a good weight through exercise, diets, and treating other medical problems.
- **NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatories)** are the mainstay of arthritis treatment. These medications help with pain and reduce inflammation in the joints. There are multiple drugs in this group including Rimadyl (Carprofen), Galliprant, or Metacam. We recommend blood work while using these medications. These may be used on an “as needed basis” in early arthritis or daily with more advanced arthritis. To start, we recommend a two-week pain medication trial to see if there are any differences at home since our pets cannot talk to us about their pain levels.
- **Dasuquin Advanced** is a chewable joint supplement. It contains glucosamine, chondroitin, MSM, and other natural ingredients that work to provide building blocks for healthy joints.
- **Prescription Diets** like Hill’s Science Diet j/d and Purina’s JM are made specifically for dogs with arthritis. These diets are well balanced and contain many of the ingredients in Dasuquin as well as high levels of fatty acids.
- **Adequan** is an injectable joint supplement. The injections can be given here at the hospital or at home. Many dogs end up receiving an injection every 1-3 months.
- **Omega 3 Fatty Acids** at high doses have been shown to decrease inflammation in the body overall and help with arthritis. We recommend a product called Welactin.
- **Other pain medications** can be given in addition to an NSAID based on the degree of your pet’s discomfort. These medications include gabapentin, amantadine, or tramadol.
- **Steroids** also relieve pain and reduce inflammation. Due to the frequent side effects, especially with long term use, they are usually reserved as a last line of medication.
- **Therapeutic laser** is a tool here at Onion River that works to reduce inflammation and pain. A technician performs a treatment (usually less than 5 minutes per joint) while your pet sits on a comfy bed and eats treats. Treatments are started 1-2 times per week for 4-6 weeks and then spread out as the patient needs them.

- **Acupuncture** is a great supplement for pain management. Dr. Erika Bruner of Berlin has a local acupuncture office just for our pets.
- **Physical Therapy** is a great way to improve muscle strength to prevent pain. Dr. Pam Levin is a certified pain doctor at BEVS that will work specifically with your pets needs to create an exercise plan.