

## **Does Arthritis Have Your Pup Aching?**

Our dogs are beloved companions and family pets. They can't tell us by speaking when they are in pain, so it is up to us to read their behaviors in order to know when they need our help. The signs of arthritis in our dogs might be difficult to spot at first, but there are some signs to look for to tell if they are struggling.

When a dog has arthritis, their joints become inflamed, and they'll experience pain, heat and swelling in the joints. As the arthritis advances, the dog will experience stiffness and immobility, so you might notice that your pet has a harder time getting up after sleeping, not playing their favorite activities, or maybe he is having a hard time jumping up to the couch or bed. Some dogs even flinch or nip when you try to pet them. Other dogs will seem depressed or grumpy or even change their eating habits. These are all symptoms that could indicate not only arthritis, but other maladies as well. Either way, it's important to act quickly once you notice your dog acting differently than normal.

Thankfully, there are many therapies, methods and medications available to help your dog feel better and have a good quality of life despite the arthritis. The first step is to visit your veterinarian, who has the ability to properly diagnose the arthritis correctly.

Some products are the most effective if the arthritis is caught early on. To relieve arthritis symptoms, veterinarians will sometimes recommend products that contain glucosamine, perna caniculus, chondroitin, vitamins and minerals. The good news is that they are usually quite effective. In other cases, surgery may be an option.

There are many other things you can do at home to make your pet's life a little easier. A soft, comfortable, slightly elevated (about a foot off the floor), place to sleep is one way to enable your dog to not only sleep well, but to get in and out of bed easier. A soft rubber foam mattress at least 4 inches thick, or a couch is ideal for cushioning your dog's joints as they rest. A hot water bottle tucked in their bed could also help relieve some of the aching and pain in your pet's joints.

Just like us, dogs need exercise to stay healthy. If your dog has developed arthritis, you'll need to encourage exercise, but limit it to gentle, short walks, a few times a day. Our joints work the most effectively when we are at a healthy weight, and our dogs are no different. Help your dog maintain an ideal weight by feeding them a healthy dog food and always make sure they have a good intake of water each day. If you are unable to easily locate your dog's ribs when you feel for them, then he might need to lose a few pounds.