

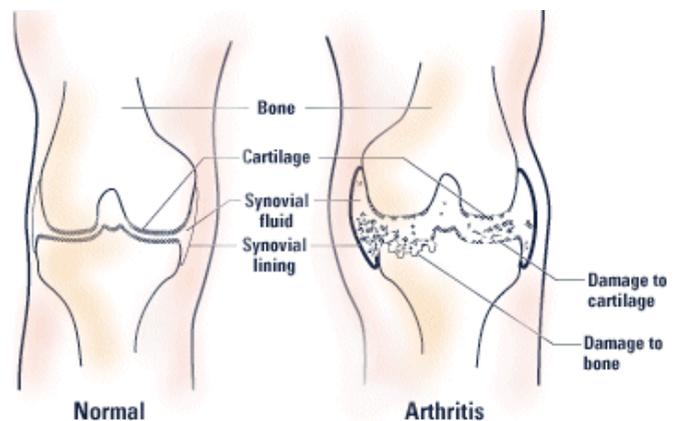
ARTHRITIS INFORMATION PACK

If this pack has been handed to you it is more than likely that your pet has been diagnosed with some form of joint disease. If you feel that your pet may have a joint condition, it is important to get an accurate diagnosis from your veterinary surgeon before you begin any treatment. The aim of this information pack is to help you understand your pet's condition and give you the options available to help treat and minimise the progression of joint disease.

What causes arthritis?

In the normal joint, the bone surfaces are covered with a thin layer of smooth cartilage. This acts as a shock absorber and provides a smooth surface for joint movement. Synovial fluid is present within the joint space and this acts as a lubricant so that the adjoining bones can slide freely over each other. In the arthritic joint, the cartilage degenerates and becomes damaged and thinned. The synovial fluid becomes watery, allowing the bone surfaces to rub together creating friction, discomfort and causing further damage to the cartilage. With time, new bone may form around the joint and this can cause the joint to become stiff and limit joint movement.

Any joint or number of joints can be involved. There are many underlying causes such as joint instability i.e. from ligament damage, damage to or abnormal development of joint cartilage, or damage caused by trauma. Any age of animal can be affected although it is more commonly seen in older pets, especially dogs.



Arthritis can also affect cats and it is commonly under diagnosed. Owners often feel that as cats get older they just slow down and become immobile but often discomfort from arthritic joints can make it painful for them to lead an active life.

Signs of joint disease

- Dogs may not be as keen to exercise, may limp or seem stiff after a walk
- Cats may not groom themselves as much and develop a matted coat
- Animals may lick excessively over a particular joint that is painful
- Cold or damp weather may make symptoms worse
- Joints may become hot and swollen

- Animals may not be able to jump into cars, on to furniture or on to their favourite window ledge
- Animals may show a change in their personality

Management of joint disease

Unfortunately, the changes that occur in an arthritic joint can not be reversed. There are various different treatments for arthritis and your vet and veterinary nurse will discuss the options best suited for your pet. Treatment is aimed at controlling pain and managing the condition to minimise further joint changes.

Diet - Excess weight places additional pressure onto joints, increasing the pain that will be caused from any joint disease. If your pet is overweight it is essential to start an effective weight loss plan immediately. The veterinary nurses are highly skilled in this area and will be more than happy to formulate a weight loss plan for your pet.

Additionally, there are many diets that contain joint supplements. These include glucosamine and chondroitin, green lip mussel extract and omega 3. All diets are aimed at different stages of joint disease so please speak to one of our nurses to advise you about the correct diet. Diet's we stock are:

- Royal Canin 'Weight and Osteo', 'Osteo and Digest' and 'Mobility Support'
- Hills J/d
- Calorie restricted diets to help weight loss that also contain joint supplements.

Chondroprotectants - These are used to help support the joint and reduce further cartilage damage. It is important that these supplements contain the correct levels of high quality ingredients to ensure effective results. They come in different forms:

- Daily dietary supplementation - The main supplements that we stock include 'Seraquin' a glucosamine hydrochloride and chondroitin sulphate supplement or 'Mobility tablets' containing green-lipped mussel extract, anti-oxidants and evening primrose oil. This is also available as a complete diet for dogs called 'Mobility'.
- An injection course - 'Cartrophen' contains a specific drug which helps support the cartilage. It is given as a course of four injections given seven days apart. This course is then repeated as necessary dependent on clinical signs.

Physiotherapy - This can help with a number of conditions using different methods such as manual manipulation, joint mobilization, neuromuscular techniques and cranial massage. A range of machines can also be used such as a pulse magnetic field, phototherapy, electrical stimulation and therapeutic ultrasound. Treatments are individually tailored for each patient.

Veterinary Surgeries

Frome 01373 452225 Warminster 01985 213350 Trowbridge 01225 754021

Acupuncture - This involves the insertion of very fine needles into acupuncture points around the body. These needles cause a release of local healing factors at the site of insertion and stimulate the release of pain relieving chemicals from the brain. One of our vets is qualified to perform acupuncture and sessions are available at our Warminster clinic.

Hydrotherapy - This helps with cardiovascular fitness, improved circulation, increased range of movement in the joints, muscle strengthening, maintenance and restoration. This will all help to support your pet's condition. It is also a good way to get your pet to lose weight without adding extra pressure to your pet's joints. It is better to go to a dedicated hydrotherapy centre as the warmth of the water helps in relaxing the muscles and fully trained staff are present at all times to help your pet.

Correct Exercise - Exercise is essential but must be in moderation. A dog with joint disease may not cope with long walks as it will put too much strain on the joints but it is important to keep your pet active. Regular exercise little and often, keeping to the same daily routine is best. A lack of exercise will lead to greater stiffness and muscle wastage. Hydrotherapy and physiotherapy can be very useful in helping to gain lost muscle mass and improving stiffness of joints. Regular exercise will help increase your pet's metabolic rate, helping towards any weight loss that is needed.

Try to avoid ball throwing and walking for long distances on hard surfaces as this can aggravate underlying joint disease.



Environment - Make sure your cat or dog has a warm, dry, draught free place to sleep on and a well padded bed. Try and reduce the number of stairs or the steepness of the slope that your pet must use. Raising feed and water bowls can help relieve extra strain on painful joints. Try and feed affected cats on the floor if possible so they do not have to jump up or down to get food.

Medication – If your pet is particularly painful, the veterinary surgeon may feel it necessary to start them on a course of non steroidal anti inflammatory drugs (NSAID'S). These will help by reducing joint pain and stiffness and providing pain relief. If used in conjunction with all or some of the above management methods, the amount of medication required can often be reduced or in some cases can be stopped. Please speak to your veterinary surgeon or nurse for advice.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT
THE SURGERY AND SPEAK TO ONE OF OUR VETERINARY SURGEONS OR
QUALIFIED VETERINARY NURSES