# Arthritis Products Overview

*Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff*

Dog arthritis is common and often associated with elbow or hip dysplasia, knee ligament injuries, and spinal disc problems. The joint cartilage is usually damaged, and sometimes there are changes to the bones. There are many ways you can help your arthritic dog be more comfortable and willing to exercise as you slow the progression of arthritis. In most cases, a multi-faceted approach that includes joint supplements, anti-inflammatories, physical aids, exercise, and weight control works best.

Joint supplements for dogs
Nutraceuticals for dogs with arthritis usually contain glucosamine, chondroitin, and/or perna mussel. These arthritis supplements contain the building blocks of cartilage and help repair the damaged joint. Joint Care Premium is our top choice for canine oral joint supplements. Many joint products contain other ingredients such as MSM, creatine, antioxidants, and vitamins. Almost all of our customers find that after their arthritic dog takes a canine joint supplement with glucosamine, chondroitin, and/or perna mussel for as little as several weeks, the dog improves markedly.

Combination canine anti-inflammatory medications and pain relievers
There are many non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDS) for dogs with arthritis that can provide pain relief while reducing the inflammation that can cause more damage to the joint. There are both non-prescription and prescription medications to choose from.

- Vetrin Canine Aspirin for dogs is a non-prescription product that reduces inflammation, is timed-released for long-lasting effect, and can be used along with nutritional glucosamine/chondroitin supplemental products.
- Prescription NSAIDS are strong and effective painkillers containing anti-inflammatory agents and include:
  - Carprofen (Rimadyl®, Novox)
  - Etodolac (EtoGesic®)
  - Deracoxib (Deramaxx)
  - Meloxicam (Metacam®)
  - Tepoxalin (Zubrin®)

  Consult your veterinarian for more information and a prescription.

Common signs of arthritis in dogs

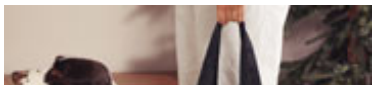
Arthritis in dogs can be mild, moderate, or severe. Typically, arthritic dogs have:
- Difficulty getting up
- Limping after exercise
- Walking more slowly
- Changes in gait
- Reluctance to jump or climb stairs
- Difficulty squatting to urinate or defecate

Anti-inflammatory supplements for dogs
Inflammation adds to the pain and causes further damage to the joint. Recent veterinary research has shown that various supplements that reduce inflammation may be beneficial to dogs with arthritis.

- Oral fatty acid supplements like Vitacaps® contain omega-3 fatty acids and are used to manage many inflammatory diseases in dogs, including arthritis.
- Duralactin, a product made from cow's milk, is an ideal long-term adjunct to glucosamine/chondroitin nutraceuticals.

Physical aids for arthritic dogs
Arthritis in dogs can be a vicious circle. The less an arthritic dog moves, the more muscle mass is lost, and the more the joint becomes unstable. You can reverse this trend by making your pet more comfortable and encouraging your arthritic pet to move about.

- An orthopedic dog bed provides good insulation and support, and makes it easier for your dog to get up. These dog beds with convoluted (egg-carton shaped) orthopedic foam distribute weight evenly and reduce pressure on joints. The Quilted Super Deluxe Bed or Deluxe Double Thick Orthopedic Pad are both very good choices.
- When even eating and drinking can be a chore for an arthritic dog, elevated dog feeders and raised waterers can be the answer. Several water-filled feeders placed around your home help ensure your arthritic dog will maintain her hydration.



- Lifts, such as the ComfortLift Carrier, provide extra help for



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dogs that have difficulty rising or walking.

- Ramps and steps help dogs that have difficulty jumping into cars or onto the bed.
- Many arthritic dogs, like people, find the cold especially uncomfortable. For inside, a heated dog bed may be just the ticket. Outdoors, try one of many sweaters or jackets for dogs that can help keep the heat in and the cold out.
- Dog harnesses are much better than collars for dogs with arthritis of the neck or back. They allow dogs to have much needed daily walks without the risk of further injury.

- Swimming is an excellent exercise for dogs with arthritis or other joint problems. Dog life preservers or flotation devices can help dogs who enjoy swimming feel more secure.

Weight control
Extra weight puts a lot more stress on damaged joints. Maintaining proper body condition is vital for dogs with arthritis. Even a few pounds can make a difference. Low calorie dog treats, such as Drs. Foster & Smith Premium All-Natural Biscuits that are low in fat can help.

Management of arthritis in dogs
In summary, there is no cure for arthritis in dogs, also called degenerative joint disease or osteoarthritis. But you can improve the quality of life for your pet. There are three main goals for helping your arthritic dog be happier and healthier:

1. Slow the progression of your dog's joint condition.
2. Improve your dog's comfort.
3. Encourage your dog to move - provide moderate daily exercise such as walks or swimming and keep your dog's weight under control.



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