



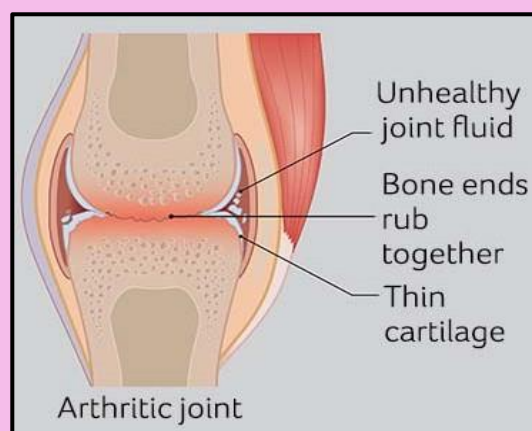
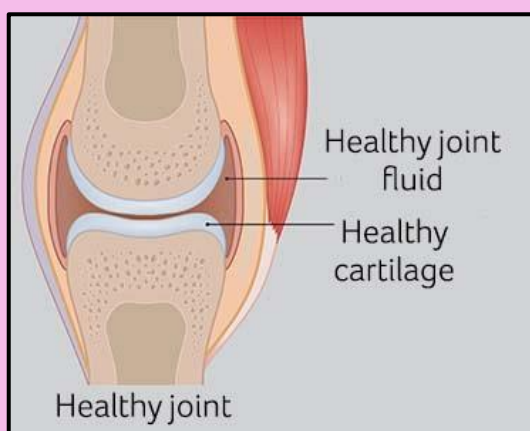
Osteoarthritis in Dogs and Cats

What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis (OA), otherwise called Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD), or simply Arthritis, is a very common and painful ailment found in pets (and people!). Around 40% of dogs and cats may be suffering from arthritis. Inflammation and progressive degeneration of the joint leads to damage to the cartilage, bones, and connective tissue resulting in ongoing pain, stiffness and discomfort. Pets with previous injuries, hip dysplasia, or who have had orthopaedic surgery are likely to develop arthritis at a younger age than dogs or cats with otherwise normal healthy joints. Any breed of dog or cat can develop arthritis, and arthritic pain will affect them at a much younger age than people often expect.

Normal joints have a small amount of lubricating synovial fluid held within a fibrous joint capsule that encloses the whole joint. In a healthy joint, a thick layer of cartilage covers the ends of the opposing bones, and blood is supplied to the joint tissues through the membrane that lines the joint capsule.

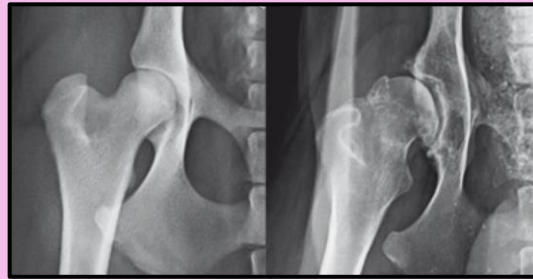
In joints affected by arthritis, the joint capsule becomes thin, inflamed and painful, the amount of synovial fluid decreases, cartilage becomes thin, ragged and torn, and the ends of the bones are exposed. As the joint moves, this results in the bone ends rubbing against each other, leading to pain and further inflammation. The joint will develop bony spurs and fragments which are easily visible on x-rays.



All joints in the body can develop arthritis, but the most commonly affected joints are the knee (stifle), elbow, and hips.



Elbow with arthritis



Normal Hip

Hip with arthritis



Spine with arthritis

How does arthritis affect our pets?

The pain associated with arthritis can be very severe, but the signs may actually be quite subtle, especially in cats, and are often mistaken for the normal signs of ageing. Most dogs, and very few cats will yelp or cry to demonstrate arthritic pain, and instead the pain caused by this disease often shows in other ways.

- Reduced mobility
- Reluctance to jump onto or off benches/beds/chairs (especially cats)
- Limping
- Difficulty rising from the floor
- Slowing down on walks
- Reduced grooming (especially cats)
- Refusal to go up or down stairs
- Difficulty getting into or out of the car
- Less keen to play or interact with other animals or people
- Occasional aggression - more likely to bite if sore areas are handled

All of these things result in an overall decrease in activity, which leads to weight gain, making arthritic pain worse. Ultimately, for pets with arthritis, their quality of life suffers significantly, and they can be down right miserable as a result of chronic pain.

What can we do about it?

Unfortunately, arthritis is an incurable and progressive disease, but there ARE ways to help our friends. The first step is to have your cat or dog assessed by a veterinarian. At The Vet Clinic, we'll work with you to help develop the best arthritis management plan for your pet. Options include:

- **Pain and inflammation management**
 - Pain medications e.g. tramadol, gabapentin, others
 - Anti-inflammatory medications e.g. meloxicam, firocoxib, carprofen
 - Immune modulating medications e.g. Beransa, Solensia
 - Other medications e.g. Cartrophen
- **Surgical management for certain cases**
 - Total hip replacement for dogs (Specialist referral required)
 - Femoral head excision for cats
 - Other Specialist surgical procedures
- **Dietary supplements**
 - 4cyte
 - Activ Joints
 - Antinol Rapid
 - Omega 3 fatty acids e.g. fish oil, green lipped mussel
 - MSM; glucosamine; chondroitin etc
- **Diet and weight management**
 - Weight loss to within a lean weight range
 - Joint specific diets eg Hill's j/d or Royal Canin Mobility
- **Exercise management**
 - Tailored activity plan
 - Physiotherapy
 - Hydrotherapy
- **Physical comfort**
 - Warm, padded bedding
 - Indoor living
 - Thick coats for dogs
 - Wheat bags or heated bedding
 - Stairs or ramps



What are the costs involved in treatment?

Because there are a range of treatments available for the management of arthritis, costs do vary depending on the management plan chosen.

In the early stages of the disease, our vets will usually recommend starting dietary supplements such as 4cyte, which costs less than \$1 a day even for most bigger dogs, depending on the dose required. As the disease progresses, anti-inflammatory medications become an important cornerstone in the provision of relief for our friends. Again, depending on the bodyweight of your pet and the dose required, costs will vary, but daily meloxicam (a useful oral anti-inflammatory pain relief) costs around \$1.20 a day for cats and between \$1 and \$5 a day for dogs.

Beransa for dogs and Solensia for cats are a very effective brand new class of medication designed to target the immune system. These are given as monthly injections in the clinic, and work out at around \$4 per day for cats and between \$4 and \$5 per day for dogs depending on their size.

It is likely that our vets will recommend performing blood tests prior to your pet starting most long term medications. This is important in order to assess the health of their kidneys, liver, and other organs to ensure they are able to process the medications safely. When pets are on long term treatments, we also recommend that these blood tests are repeated every 6-12 months. Blood tests range in cost from around \$130 to \$300.

Is there anything I can do at home?

Beyond ensuring your pet receives any medications strictly as directed, our vets can work with you to develop a tailored exercise plan aimed at keeping your pet active and comfortable for as long as possible. Ensuring your arthritic pet does not have to work too hard to get around is really important. Ramps to help them get into and out of the car or on and off the bed; ramps up steps or staircases; soft thick beds and coats; and ensuring they don't have to jump onto benches for food or sleeping places are all especially helpful in keeping our pets comfortable.

How can I get more information?

If you think your dog or cat might have arthritis, the best thing to do is make an appointment with one of our vets for a full consultation and physical exam of your pet. We will then work with you to develop the best management plan for you and your friend going forward.

To make an appointment, simply contact The Vet Clinic on 8564 3488 and speak to one of our knowledgeable and friendly nurses.