

## Arthritis in Mature Dogs (Inflamed Joints)

The most common cause of arthritis in older dogs is a progressive process of degeneration of protective cartilage and inflammation of all joint components (cartilage, bone, joint capsule, etc.). This is known as degenerative joint disease, or DJD. It will lead to decreased joint fluid, damage and loss of cartilage, and the formation of new, abnormal bone within the joint capsule.

Commonly Reported Signs:

- Struggling to rise and stiffness after rest.
- Decreased activity.
- Limping.
- Difficulty with stairs, jumping, and slippery surfaces

Tests that can be helpful include x-rays, bloodwork, and a joint fluid analysis.

Treatment:

- All dogs should be brought towards a healthy weight to decrease the stress on joints.
- All dogs should have daily low-impact activity such as walking and swimming to maintain muscle tone and flexibility.
- You can try a joint supplement containing glucosamine and chondroitin. They are thought to replenish joint fluid and be a building block for repair of damaged cartilage.
- Fish oil and fatty acid supplements can have antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects in joints.
- Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs) are safe and very effective at decreasing pain and increasing limb strength.
- Other pain relievers such as Tramadol are available if needed.
- Some dogs can get good temporary relief by injecting steroid anti-inflammatory drugs into painful joints.
- Surgery is indicated and helpful in some cases. A good percentage of these can be approached arthroscopically.