



Pawsitive Steps Canine Rehab

Putting the pep
back in your pup's
step

Osteoarthritis and the aging pup

It is reported that arthritis affects 3 in 5 dogs. However, that does not mean your pup's activities need to be limited. Oftentimes, as dogs age, the fallback answer to your dog's decreased mobility is "they're slowing down" or "they're getting older", "they are just aging". While these answers may be true, at least in part, it does not have to stop their activities or become a life sentence.

Signs and Symptoms

There are many ways arthritis can present but commonly you will notice your dog having more difficulty and increased stiffness when getting up from the floor, an uncontrolled sit or lay down from a standing position, stiffness through the back and legs, decreased participation in walking, running, jumping or playing.

How is it diagnosed?

Many senior dogs are diagnosed with osteoarthritis based on subjective reports of pet parents, a physical examination by a veterinarian, and radiographs once symptoms have presented themselves. However, arthritis can start at a very young age and progressively worsen until there are physical signs. Arthritis is inflammation of the joint that causes degeneration of the cartilage, leading to thickening of the surrounding tissues. This turns into a vicious cycle- as pain increases, activities decrease, leading to more stiffness and weakness, and likely weight gain which just exacerbates the pain and cycle.



How is it treated?

There are numerous ways to treat arthritis, both naturally and with pharmaceutical treatments. Talk to your veterinarian to explore those options. Modalities, such as Cold Laser, Pulsed ElectroMagnetic Field Therapy (PEMF), acupuncture/dry needling have all shown to be effective in pain management.

Research in humans repeatedly demonstrates the great benefits that physical therapy, especially strengthening, can have on arthritic pains and stiffness; it's the same in dogs. While pain medications and supplements may be used to assist with pain management, they do not provide the same long term benefits as regular physical activities. A certified canine rehabilitation therapist can help develop a program tailored to your dog and their difficulties, that will include manual treatments, and a progressive exercise program that you will perform at home regularly.



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But my pup is getting older....

Don't worry! There are plenty of things you can do to help keep your dog active and happy!

- **Shorter, more frequent walks**--Your pup may not be able to tolerate those long walks or hikes anymore, but they still need their exercise!
- **Maintaining a healthy weight:** senior dogs need more protein in their diets to maintain the muscle mass that they do have, and being overweight significantly increases the load placed on their joints.
- **Mental Enrichment:** there are tons of puzzle toys out there to challenge a dogs mind and sniffer, or make your own- Pinterest has plenty of ideas, get creative.
- **One-on-one time:** continued social and emotional enrichment is very important as your dogs body may not be able to do as much physically. Still take them to see their friends
- **Strengthening and stretching program:** under the guidance of a certified canine rehabilitation therapist, they can help keep your dog moving their best and set up an individualized program to maintain their independence.
- **Home modifications:** many homes have hard floor throughout which tend to be very slipper for your dog, just by adding runners, rugs or even yoga mats in the home in a path the dog typically walks can give them a great level of stability and confidence when moving around the home. Orthopedic dog beds such as Big Barker can provide them with a nice supportive place to lay during their naps.



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405-367-5732

Instagram: PawsitivestepsOK

Facebook: Pawsitive Steps Canine Rehab-Pawsitive Steps OK

pawsitivestepsok@gmail.com

www.pawsitivestepsOK.com