



Pawsitive Steps

Canine Rehab

Physical Therapy and Wellness

Putting the pep
back in your
pup's step

Home Modifications for Injured or Aging Animals

Have you noticed your dog slipping when walking around especially on the hard floors in your home, avoiding certain areas of your house that have hard floors, what about difficulty getting on the couch to cuddle with you, or following you up the stairs? There are many ways you can make adjustments to your home environment that can help you dog move a little easier and more confidently.

Flooring

The most important recommendation is to make sure the flooring provides an opportunity for traction for the dog to stand up, walk and change directions. Many homes have hard tile, wood and vinyl flooring in the main living spaces, which can be an ice skating rink to your dog. Adding rugs, runners, gym floor tiles and yoga mats in the primary spaces and hallways the dog navigates can really help them stay up and moving with greater ease.

Stairs

Same as other flooring, providing the dog with more traction on a hard floor by placing carpets and rugs can help them keep their grip while going up and down stairs. Stairs come in all shapes and sizes and may be unavoidable depending on the housing situation. Going up stairs can be used as a great strengthening and range of motion activity for front and back limbs, which is also why it can be very challenging for them to do. Going down stairs loads the front limbs quite a bit, and you may need to assist them more with a harness or sling to help support. Other options getting harnesses such as Help 'Em Up harness to help them navigate the stairs. Ramps can also be an option, which are often found at the pet store or Amazon.

Bedding

All dogs deserve a warm, comfortable place to rest, but note some may still choose to lay on the floor despite numerous softer options. Bedding should be supportive and actually lift them from the ground such as memory foam- if you kneel on the bed you should not be able to feel ground. Bedding should be placed in a warm/non-drafty area, and non-slick floor should be around the bed. If your dog stays in a crate it should be large enough for them to stand up, move around and stretch out.

Nail and Food Care--No Grinch feet!

It is very important to keep toe nails trimmed short, over-grown nails can change the biomechanics of the digits and could lead to arthritis in the toes and other compensations. Ideally nails are trimmed at minimum monthly, and a dremel tool may be more tolerated.

Dogs with long hair between their pads should have this hair trimmed regularly to help improve traction. Your vet or local groomer can help!



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Feeding Stations

Raising the food and water bowl can help dogs with arthritis. When eating from a bowl on the floor, it further loads their front limbs which can aggravate pain and symptoms in the front limbs and lead to further compensations. Raising the bowl to their shoulder level, with minimal neck flexion (bending forward) can help shift their weight between all limbs.

Make sure a non-slick surface is in front of the feeding station as well, especially if your dog makes a mess with their water.. Yoga mats are great for providing traction while eating and drinking.

Stair Stepping onto furniture

Furniture is expensive and may not be feasible to replace. However, if your pup loves his or her place on the couch or bed, you can do things to make it easier for them. First, the floor needs to be a non skid surface as previously discussed. Secondly, add a somewhat firm surface that is big enough for your pup to get onto and that is in-between the height of the desired surface and the ground. For example, a Big Barker® orthopedic bed placed in front of the couch. It is 10" and a fairly firm surface that will allow the pup to jump part of the distance onto the couch. Another example is one that I use for my dog at home. I have an extremely high bed, so I have a rectangular ottoman at the foot of the bed and then the a thick bed in front of the ottoman. My dog goes from the floor, onto the thick bed, then the ottoman, and finally my bed.

Equipment Recommendations

Additional equipment can help provide your dog with traction, or harnesses may be used when your dog needs more assistance with standing and walking. Wheelchairs (available at clinic) can also be used as an assistive device for dogs with neurological conditions and come in all wheeled and size varieties.

Specific items include (many are available are amazon):

Harnesses- there is a difference between a walking harness and an assistive device for support, these are for support:

Help 'em up Harness

Booties/Traction- please remember to take them off for the night, and for short times during the day to allow the paws to breathe:

HCPet waterproof Dog Boots (available at clinic)

Anti-Slip Grips Paw Pad

Dr Buzby's ToeGrips

Orthopedic Beds- Big Barker

Steps/Ramps- PetSafe



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