

Arthritis



What is arthritis?

Arthritis is the inflammation of a joint, which can cause pain and/or swelling. Several types exist, including rheumatoid, degenerative and infectious arthritis, each of which has a different cause. An arthritic joint can cause immense pain, especially in the morning and in cold weather.

As your pet's advocate, it's up to you to watch for trouble. Call us if your pet shows these signs of arthritis:

- Becomes less active
- Gets up slowly
- Walks stiffly or limps
- Has swollen joints
- Yelps, especially during exercise
- Hesitates or refuses to climb stairs
- Has a fever
- Seems depressed

Comprehensive examinations, such as those covered by Banfield Optimum Wellness Plans®, help your veterinarian detect and treat arthritis before it becomes too painful. If your pet doesn't receive regular exams, the arthritis may already be advanced when you notice it. If you do notice signs of arthritis, see a veterinarian immediately. Your doctor will perform a complete physical examination and may use blood tests, x-rays and joint fluid analysis to help determine the cause and severity of the arthritis.

Medical treatment

Veterinary care can help reduce inflammation and ease the pain of arthritis. Some of the tools your veterinarian may use to treat your pet:

- Antibiotics help treat infectious causes of arthritis. Immunosuppressive drugs are effective against autoimmune disorders.
- Nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) help control the debilitating effects of degenerative arthritis. These medications can effectively control pain and inflammation in dogs. In fact, your older dog may act like a puppy again!
- Chondroprotective agents, including glucosamine and chondroitin, are natural compounds that the body uses to replenish joint materials.
- MSM (natural dietary sulfur), antioxidant vitamins and fatty acid supplements may decrease the inflammatory effects of arthritis.
- Cortisone can be effective in the treatment of arthritis but can have side effects with prolonged use at high dosages.

The bottom line is that there are many, many therapeutic options to help older pets deal effectively with this common condition of old age.

What you can do

Lightening the load on joints may help decrease the pain associated with arthritis. If your pet is overweight, proper diet and weight control is essential. Your Banfield veterinarian can recommend a therapeutic diet and exercise program, such as regular walking, to decrease your pet's weight safely. Providing a padded bed and a warm, dry environment and appropriate medications for your pet can also help control discomfort.

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

