



Tips to Comfort your Arthritic Dog

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Introduction

Dog arthritis is one of the most common diseases that affect canines; especially large breed dogs (60-90 lbs) the best thing you can do is to prevent the occurrence of this disease with the appropriate supplements when your dog is 4 or 5 years old and not wait until symptoms show.

Damage remaining from old injuries and accumulated damage from poorly formed joints becomes more troublesome. Muscle mass decreases and muscles become weaker, especially in the rear legs.

If your pet's joints were badly formed from birth, such as in dogs with hip dysplasia, the joint begins to wear down as early as six months of age. But even perfectly made hips, elbows, and spines can become inflamed after years of ordinary movement.

Just as human arthritis, dog arthritis tends to get worse with age, so if your dog is already presenting symptoms and/or pain you should consider several tips to comfort and protect your arthritic dog.

Tip #1: Avoid cold and humidity

Arthritis pain gets worse on cold or rainy days. If you observe your dog carefully, you will notice that he may be heading for the warmer parts of the house (maybe the kitchen) on cold or rainy days.

1. Get your dog all dressed up if you plan to take him for a walk on a cold, rainy or windy day.
2. A throw or blanket would be a nice addition to his bed or sleeping spot to keep him warm during sleep and minimize pain or discomfort.
3. You can look on your local pet store or online stores for a heated bed if you live in a colder climate.
4. Or I'm pretty sure he would love to share YOUR bed with you. ;-)

Tip #2: Provide cushioning

Since cushioning absorbs impact, you should provide plenty of cushioned surfaces for your dog to walk on or lounge.

1. Carpeting or rugs are better than concrete and hardwood floors.
2. Comfy padded beds, if possible, include one on every room of the house so he has a resting spot everywhere and can follow you around.

Tip #3: Make your home “arthritic-proof”

Think the same way you would as for childproofing your home. Consider what your dog loved to do and where he loved to be before he started showing symptoms, because chances are he will try to keep doing the same things.

1. If he loved to climb up to your bed, or sofa with you and now it's too high for him to climb up, provide a way for him to get up and down so he can keep enjoying his favorite spot without the hazard of falling. You can find ramps for that purpose on several pet stores or online.
2. You should consider installing a rubber runner on your stairs or you may need to block your stairs with a fence completely to avoid dangerous falls. Likewise, you should install carpet runners on slippery surfaces, such as tile, linoleum, or hardwood floors.

Tip #4: Keep your dog's toenails trimmed

Now that your Pooch is not as active as before, there's not enough natural wear down of the toenails to keep them at the right length. You should carefully inspect your dog's toenails and clip them regularly, also, pay attention to any abrasion over the upper surface of the toes that may be a sign of the toe being dragged, which could be a sign of a more serious problem of the nervous system.

Tip #5: “Use it or lose it”

That's a common rule to arthritis patients either humans or animals. If you don't exercise you'll be promoting loss of bone strength, muscle strength, and joint mobility. So take note that a regular mild exercise routine needs to be incorporated. But be careful, you should only choose from low or no impact exercises.

Good exercises for arthritis patients:

Walk- Take your dog to a slow paced walk, in the morning or evening. Let your dog decide when he's had enough and pay extra attention to any pain or discomfort signs.

Swimming- During warm weather, this could be especially beneficial in moderate amounts. Again, let your dog decide when he's had enough and pay extra attention to any pain or discomfort signs.

Physical Therapy- This can help restore mobility and it includes gentle range of

motion joint exercises, therapeutic massage, applications of heat or cold, supported standing on a physiotherapy ball, balancing exercises, and swimming and underwater treadmill exercise among other things.

Tip #6: Provide easier access to the “potty”

Install a dog-door and if you already have one, consider enlarging the opening, cutting the hole higher and/or deeper, making it more accessible for dog’s who have trouble lifting or bending their legs.

Tip # 7: Call “Jenny Craig”

With less physical activity comes the risk of gaining weight, so you must be alert to your dog’s weight gain as obesity puts an added burden on age-impaired joints, muscles, heart, lungs, etc.

1. Change his dog food to a weight control formula.
2. Reduce his caloric intake.
3. Feed a high quality, easily digestible diet.
4. If you feed home cooking, consult a veterinary nutritionist or veterinarian to ensure a diet that is correct for your dog's individual health conditions.

Tip #8: Groom your dog regularly

The coat of an old dog that lies around a lot will tend to matt more quickly. Go for a practical coat style for easier grooming instead of a fashionable style for dog shows.

At the same time, carefully look and feel all over your dog's body for anything unusual lumps or sores which should be promptly examined by your vet.

Tip #9: Massage your dog’s pain away

You can hire a professional pet masseuse or you can do it yourself, but a massage will give your dog pleasure, relief from stiffness, stimulation for blood circulation, and if you do it yourself it will add an additional benefit, an expression of your affection.

Tip #10: Do mental calisthenics with your dog

Mental health is just as important as physical health, keep your dog alert by regularly playing with him. Make him think! Some games he would enjoy:

1. The Hidden Owner- The owner hides somewhere in the room or house and calls the dog so he can be found by the dog.
2. The Hidden Treat- Hide a treat or favorite food inside a toy, towel or furniture and tell the dog to find it.
3. The Hidden Toy- Hide a favorite toy within your clothing or part of the body and tell your dog to find it.

Reward your dog once he has “won” the game, you can give him a treat, a hug or a big kiss!

Tip #11: Engage in recreational activities

Recreation is considered a very effective therapy for various conditions. These are fun and safe ways to entertain your dog so he can forget about his aches. With a little imagination you will come up with several more recreational activities.

1. Take your dog to the park to hang out with other “friends”.
2. Take him on a car trip so he can feel the breeze in his face.
3. Participate in dog costume contests.
4. Be spectators on sporting events.

Tip #12: Love and be loved

Your dog has given you his best. He’s proud to be seen with you even if you’re ugly, he’s the one who stays by your bed when you’re sick, and if he was put in your position, he would not hesitate to take good care of you, because he loves you unconditionally.

Lay on the green grass with your dog; cuddle on the couch to watch a movie together, caress your dog every chance you’ve got. Tell him over and over how much you love him and how important he is to you. He WILL understand.

I haven’t included the nutritional and medicinal aspects which you should be considering if you have an arthritic dog, because I assume you and your pet’s vet are already taking care of that. These are only a few tips to comfort and protect your arthritic dog. I’m sure you will find a few more ways.

If you're interested in using herbal supplements and holistic remedies on your pet, please visit: www.MindBodyAndPaw.com, so you can explore our selection of herbal supplements and holistic remedies for common cat and dog conditions.