

Joint Medications & Supplements for Cats

Waterbury Veterinary Hospital

Degenerative joint disease is the #1 cause of chronic pain in our feline companions. When dealing with arthritis in our feline patients we often take a multimodal approach: a combination of supplements, pain relievers, exercise, diet, and alternative therapies. Our goal is to reduce the chronic pain, give your pet a better quality of life as they get older, and slow the progression of further joint damage.

Glucosamine & Chondroitin Sulfate/MSM *Recommended brands: Dasuquin Advanced or Glycoflex III*
Cartilage is made up of glucosamine and chondroitin sulfate. By taking these products orally, the patient is providing the necessary “building blocks” needed to repair damaged cartilage. These products may have some anti-inflammatory properties as well. One to two months of use is required for them to build up adequate amounts in the joint.

- These substances are classified as “nutriceuticals” rather than “drugs” and are therefore available over the counter.
- These products often complement treatment with NSAIDs.

Omega Fatty Acids *Recommended brands: Welactin or VetriScience Omega 3,6,9*
The use of Omega Fatty Acids is a nutritional approach to helping many inflammatory diseases including arthritis. They work by modulating the immune response so that there is less inflammation. Response to fatty acid supplementation could take up to 6 weeks.

Meloxicam or Onsior: *Prescription Medication – requires routine exams, blood work*
Meloxicam is a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory. Typically a trial period of about a month is prescribed to see if the effect is worth continuing.

- These medications can have an affect on renal perfusion and are metabolized in the liver; therefore routine blood work is required for long-term use and should be used cautiously in cats with pre-existing renal or liver disease.

Gabapentin: *Prescription medication - requires routine exams*
Gabapentin is a pain reliever that treats neuropathic pain. Any animal with arthritis has some degree of neurological pain and this medication deals with that aspect. It does not decrease inflammation so should be used with other medicine.

- Very safe, wide range of doses. Can cause mild sedation

Buprenorphine *Prescription medication – requires routine exam, prescribed in limited quantities*
Buprenorphine is an opioid that provided great pain control for cats. However, it does not have any anti-inflammatory properties so it will not treat the underlying inflammation, just the resulting pain.

- Can be used “as needed” for pain relief

Laser Therapy

Cold laser or Class IV laser therapy is a noninvasive procedure that uses light to stimulate cell regeneration and increase blood circulation. This leads to less inflammation, increase cellular repair, and decreased pain.

- Typically sessions last 10 – 15 minutes and need to be scheduled ahead of time
- Recommend starting with two sessions a week for 2-3 weeks, then decrease to once a week, and then every two weeks.

Physical Therapy/Acupuncture/Chiropractic Medicine

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There are many integrative options available to help with joint pain and osteoarthritis. If you are interested in learning more, please let us know and we can recommend practitioners in the area.

***** Weight Control *****

Weight control just as important, if not more so, than any medication or supplements listed above. Extra weight means more stress on your pet's joints. We are happy to calculate your pet's ideal body weight and how much to feed them per day to attain that weight. Proper exercise and good nutrition for the arthritic patient is essential to maintaining good muscle tone to support joint function.