

Joint Medications & Supplements

Waterbury Veterinary Hospital

Degenerative joint disease is the #1 cause of chronic pain our canine companions. When dealing with arthritis in our canine 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 “nutraceuticals” 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.

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

- These medications are metabolized by the liver and can affect renal perfusion, so blood work to assess organ function is done before starting long term use and monitored regularly.
- It should be used cautiously in animals with elevations in liver enzymes, pre-existing liver disease, Cushing’s disease, or Phenobarbital.

Galliprant (grapiprant): *Prescription medication – requires routine exams, blood work* Also an NSAID, but targeted action to treat canine osteoarthritis pain and inflammation. It is a daily medication, safe to use long term.

- More targeted therapy, therefore has less potential adverse effects on liver and kidney function. Routine blood work is still recommended to monitor organ function while on this medication.

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

Adequan Injections *Recommended dosage: 2mg/lb*

Adequan is a “polysulfated glycosaminoglycan” (PSGAG) and is a component of cartilage. Adequan has numerous beneficial effects for the arthritic patient, including the inhibition of harmful enzymes involved in joint cartilage destruction, stimulation of cartilage repair, anti-inflammatory effects, and increasing joint fluid and lubrication. It is given as an injection and seems to have an affinity for damaged joints.

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- The typical schedule of injections would be one injection every 4 days for 6 injections and then once a month.

SAMe (S-Adenosyl Methionin)

Recommended dosage: 10mg/lb/day

A "Neutraceutical" that can be used as an adjunctive treatment for liver disease (chronic hepatitis) and osteoarthritis. Well tolerated, not a regulated drug.

- Adverse effects appear to be minimal or non-existent in treated animals.
- Administer tablets to animal with an empty stomach, preferably at least one hour before feeding

Laser Therapy

Cold laser therapy 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

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 supplement listed above. Extra weight means more stress on your pet's joints. If your pet is overweight please ask us to help you formulate a weight loss plan. 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.