

CAT ARTHRITIS: SYMPTOMS, PAIN RELIEF, TREATMENTS, AND TYPES



At Absecon Veterinary Hospital, we recommend that cat owners take a yearly video of their cat doing the following activities: walking, running, going up and down stairs, jumping up and down, and play activity. Save these videos so that your veterinarian can view them yearly to determine pain and any progression of joint stiffness.

Cat arthritis is a common condition that causes painful joints and makes moving uncomfortable. There is no cure for cat arthritis, but you can take steps to make your cat feel better. If you notice your cat slowing down or showing signs of pain when they move, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian right away.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ARTHRITIS IN CATS?

Usually, the bones in your cat's body slide past each other easily and are protected by a healthy joint fluid and cartilage. When a cat has arthritis, the smooth surface is worn down, and the bones grind against each other like sandpaper. Symptoms include:

- Reluctance or hesitation to jump up or down
- Difficulty going up or down stairs
- Limping
- Stiffness in the legs, especially after sleeping or resting
- Difficulty using the litter box
- Irritability
- Reduced activity level
- Less time spent grooming
- Reduced height in jumps
- Hiding or sleeping more than normal

CAUSES OF CAT ARTHRITIS:

Some of the most common factors that increase the risk of arthritis in cats are:

- Wear and tear. The joints may weaken as the cat gets older
- Abnormalities. Abnormal hip development may affect cartilage around joints.
- Injury. When a cat experiences a joint fracture or joint injury, it may cause arthritis.
- Obesity. While there is no scientific evidence that obesity causes arthritis, it may make the condition worse
- Genetics. Some cat breeds have an increased risk of arthritis due to abnormal development of the hips or cartilage. This is most common in Maine Coon, Persian, Scottish Fold and, Siamese cats.



ARTHRITIS IN BACK LEGS:

Arthritis can affect any part of a cat's body, but it's common in legs. When cat arthritis occurs in the back legs it can greatly limit your cat's mobility. In some cases, cat arthritis can cause lameness where the cat will begin limping or favoring one leg when they walk. Many times, this causes the cat to become much less active and spend more time resting:

A licensed veterinarian can help determine if your cat has arthritis in their back legs and help put together a treatment plan.

Most cats don't display obvious signs that they have arthritis. They tend to hide their pain even when they're in distress. This can make it challenging to identify when there is a problem.

HOW IS CAT ARTHRITIS DIAGNOSED?

If a veterinarian suspects arthritis, they'll review your cat's medical history and complete a physical exam. The veterinarian will specifically look for:

- Visible Joint deformity
- Joint pain
- Decreased range of motion
- Grating (scraping noise) when the cat moves its joints
- Fluid in the joints
- Joint instability

To confirm an arthritis diagnosis, your veterinarian will complete an X-ray to take pictures of the inside of the cat's body and especially their bones.

HOW IS CAT ARTHRITIS TREATED?

There are a few different treatment options available for cats with arthritis:

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs). The most common treatment for cat arthritis. NSAIDs are prescribed by a licensed veterinarian who can help determine the type and duration of the treatment.
- Pain management medication. In some cases, cats will be given painkilling drugs in cases where non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs are not appropriate or not sufficient.
- Injectable joint protectants. This treatment involves a veterinarian giving the cat injections of glycosaminoglycans about every four weeks to help relieve arthritic pain
- Acupuncture. Although the studies regarding acupuncture for cat arthritis is limited, some cats may benefit from it. Acupuncture is an old healing practice in Chinese medicine where needles are placed at specific points in the body to relieve pain
- Cold laser therapy, or photobiomodulation (PBMT) This noninvasive and painless allows a vet to move a small device that emits therapeutic light waves across your pet's body on top of their fur. Treatment has been shown to decrease inflammation and ease pain.

If you suspect your cat has arthritis, a licensed veterinarian can help determine the best treatment option for your cat.

HOME REMEDIES FOR CAT ARTHRITIS

One of the best ways to help a cat who has arthritis is to create a comfortable safe environment for them. You can do this by:

- Giving your cat a soft, warm bed that is easy for your cat to get into and out of
- Providing a ramp up to places they like to rest, such as your bed or a couch or a window seat
- Providing a litter box with at least one low side
- Keeping everything your cat needs - like food, water, and the litter box - on one floor of your home
- Using soft brushes for grooming
- Helping them maintain a healthy weight to put less stress on their joints

However, if you pay attention to subtle signs like difficulty jumping or sudden issues with the litter box, you may be able to detect potential problems early on. The earlier on you can start treating cat arthritis, the better.

If you suspect your cat is in pain and may have arthritis, schedule a visit with your veterinarian as soon as possible.

