

Most Dogs Will Suffer From This, Give Yours a New Lease on Life

Eventually, 4 in 5 dogs will be plagued with this painful and immobilizing condition. Stay a step ahead and know about this safe and effective therapy that I consider a phenomenal treatment. It reduces pain and inflammation by boosting circulation. Give your pet the priceless gift of comfort.

Analysis by Dr. Karen Shaw Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Unfortunately, the vast majority of dogs will at some point in their lives suffer from arthritis
- Laser therapy treatments are proving to be tremendously beneficial in controlling pain and improving mobility in arthritic dogs
- The energy delivered by the light of the laser increases production of cell fuel, reduces inflammation and pain and increases circulation in treated areas
- A multimodal approach yields the best results in helping arthritic dogs remain comfortable and mobile
- In addition to lasers and other noninvasive techniques, an effective arthritis treatment protocol should also include daily exercise, physical therapy and appropriate oral supplementation

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Four out of five older dogs suffers with arthritis, but what many people don't realize is the condition has more to do with genetics and a dog's development (including puppy nutrition) than normal wear and tear on the joints of the body. In fact, joint degeneration often begins as puppies experience a rapid growth spurt during the first 4 to 6 months of life.

This means that for many dogs, especially large and giant breeds, the problem starts during puppyhood, but isn't diagnosed or even noticed until it takes a significant toll later in life.

This is one of the reasons I recommend feeding a nutritionally balanced diet that meets **FEDIAF** (the European Pet Food Industry Federation — the European equivalent to AAFCO) standards for large breed puppies (early and late growth) because those standards are more appropriate for large and giant breeds.

Since the vast majority of canine companions will at some point suffer from arthritis pain, it's important to keep abreast of what types of alternative therapies are available to help your dog remain comfortable and mobile. One of the most promising is laser therapy.

Laser Therapy Is Proving To Be a Miracle Treatment for Many Dogs With Arthritis

In recent years, veterinary laser therapy has grown very popular, and laser equipment has become safer and more effective. C.J. Puotinen, writing for Whole Dog Journal, offers a laser equipment primer:

"Class 1 and 2 lasers, which include laser pointers, are generally considered safe but have limited therapeutic use. Class 3 lasers (type 3A emits visible light and type 3B emits nonvisible light) have some therapeutic uses.

The most recent laser classification (Class 4), approved for medical use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2005, is used in human and veterinary medicine to improve circulation, relax muscles, and reduce inflammation, pain, and swelling caused by injuries, surgery, or chronic conditions, such as arthritis.

LLLT, or Low Level Laser Therapy, is performed with 'cold' or 'soft' lasers, which penetrate the skin's surface with minimal heating. According to the research group ColdLasers.org, which describes over 40 therapeutic lasers, some class 4 cold lasers will warm the treatment area but are not considered hot lasers because they cannot cut or cauterize tissue."¹

How Laser Therapy Works

Lasers work through a process known as photobiostimulation. The photonic energy delivered by the light of the laser changes cellular chemistry by:

- Increasing production of cell fuel (ATP, or adenosine triphosphate)
- Reducing inflammation and pain
- Increasing circulation at the injury site

Laser light in the red and near-infrared range triggers a photochemical reaction in the body that increases blood flow to tissues. This in turn promotes improved function in the growth, replication and repair of cells, as well as the production of important compounds like enzymes, DNA/RNA, immunoglobulins and proteins.

Lifestyle Suggestions for Arthritic Dogs

I have always found that a multimodal approach to managing arthritis is critical for slowing its progression. Physical therapy is an absolute must for arthritic pets and should be designed to maintain and increase joint strength, muscle tone and range of motion. This can be accomplished with therapeutic exercises, swimming and massage.

Keeping your pet at a lean, healthy weight is absolutely crucial in preventing or alleviating arthritis symptoms. An overweight dog with arthritis can have noticeable improvement in symptoms after losing just a small amount of body weight.

Pets need to move their bodies more, not less, as they age. Although the intensity, duration and type of exercise will change, daily activity is still crucial to prevent profound musculoskeletal weakness with age. Muscles maintain your pet's frame, so preserving muscle tone will also slow the amount of joint laxity (which causes arthritis) as well.

Other crucial factors in maintaining the health of an arthritic pet include feeding a nutritionally balanced, species-appropriate diet, and avoiding unnecessary revaccinations (titer test instead).

In addition to therapies such as laser treatments and the **Assisi loop**, I've found that incorporating maintenance chiropractic, acupuncture, **daily stretching** and mild exercise along with an oral protocol to manage pain and inflammation will yield the best results possible for an arthritic dog.

Oral Protocol Recommendations

Chondroprotective agents (CPAs) that protect the joints, including glucosamine sulfate, MSM, eggshell membrane, perna mussel (green-lipped clam), Adequan and cetyl myristoleate are essential for dogs with arthritis. CPAs slow the rate of cartilage degeneration, which is critical.

The form, dose and type of CPA your veterinarian prescribes should be based on a careful assessment of your dog's individual needs. CPAs should be blended with pain control options as necessary.

There are many natural remedies for arthritis that can reduce or eliminate the need for painkillers, including a high-quality omega-3 supplement (krill oil), ubiquinol, turmeric, supergreen foods (spirulina, astaxanthin), natural anti-inflammatory formulas (herbs, proteolytic enzymes, nutraceuticals, TCM formulas), homeopathic remedies (Rhus tox, Arnica) and Esterified Fatty Acid Complex (EFAC).

There are also Ayurvedic and Chinese herbs and nutraceuticals that can be very beneficial for dogs with arthritis, depending on their individual symptoms. It's important to monitor your pet's symptoms on an ongoing basis, because arthritis progresses over time. Your dog's body is constantly changing, and her treatment protocol will need to evolve as well.

I recommend bringing your pet for a wellness checkup with your veterinarian at least twice a year to review the status of her health, and to check the range of motion in her joints, the muscle mass she is either gaining or losing and to make adjustments to her protocol as necessary to ensure her quality of life is optimal.

Sources and References

¹ [Whole Dog Journal March 21, 2019](#)
