



# WHAT IS CANINE OSTEOARTHRITIS?

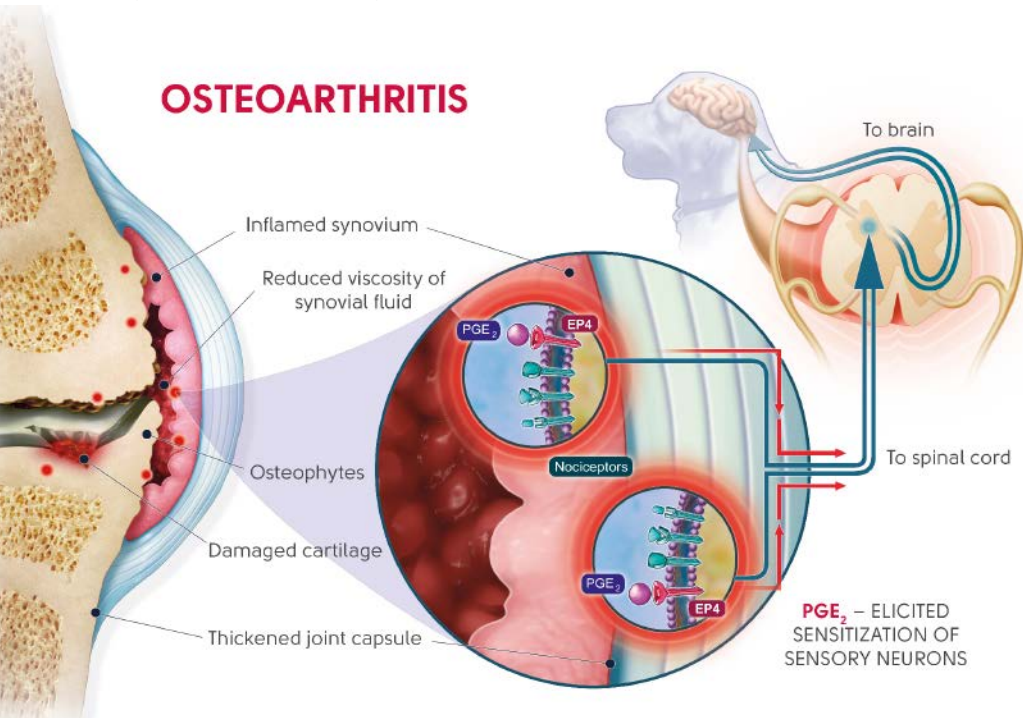
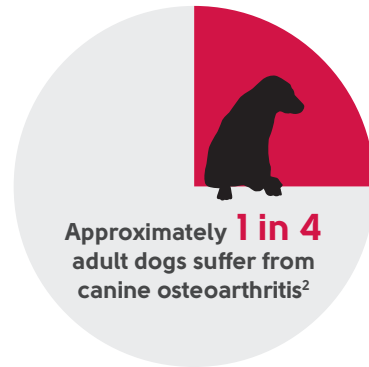
**IF YOUR DOG HAS BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH OSTEOARTHRITIS,  
IT MIGHT FEEL LIKE AN ACTIVE FUTURE IS AT RISK.**

This guide explains what osteoarthritis is, how to spot the signs, and how it can be treated early so you can protect the moments that matter.

## WHAT IS CANINE OSTEOARTHRITIS?

Canine osteoarthritis (sometimes called arthritis or OA), is a disease that affects your dog's joints, and is the most common cause of chronic pain in dogs.<sup>1</sup> It gets worse over time, making it harder for a dog to do normal everyday activities.

In a joint with osteoarthritis, the cartilage is damaged. This smooth bone coating starts to wear away and the surface no longer glides. The joint becomes swollen, inflamed and painful, which makes your dog try to avoid using it.



## WHAT CAUSES IT?

Canine OA does not just affect elderly, large breed dogs. In fact, OA often starts at a young age, and can affect dogs of all sizes.<sup>3</sup>

### YOUNG DOGS

Some younger dogs are more likely to develop OA due to genetics, breed or body shape. The most common cause of OA is developmental joint disorders such as hip or elbow dysplasia.

### DOGS OF ANY AGE

OA can develop in dogs of any age due to injury, which sometimes requires surgery. Being overweight can also put an abnormal stress on the joints.

### ELDERLY DOGS

In older dogs, OA can be caused by age-related wear and tear of joints, or worsening of OA that developed earlier in life.

**Has your dog had any injuries?**  
**Is their breed more susceptible to OA?**  
**Is their weight putting stress on their joints?**

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF OA?

The early signs of OA in dogs are often subtle and easy to miss. No matter how minor the changes may seem, they are too important to ignore because even the earliest changes could indicate that your dog is struggling with OA. The condition can get worse if left untreated.



### WALKING

#### EARLY OA

Your dog will still enjoy walking but may slow down or lag behind.

#### AS OA PROGRESSES

Your dog may refuse to walk, or may tolerate only short walks with plenty of rests. Limping and stiffness may become very obvious.



### CHANGES IN GENERAL BEHAVIOUR

#### EARLY OA

Your dog might do their usual activities more slowly, or seem unsure and look for assistance.

#### AS OA PROGRESSES

Your dog avoids their normal behaviours, or even looks frightened or distressed.

## HAVE YOU NOTICED ANY CHANGES IN YOUR DOG'S BEHAVIOUR?

It's important to keep an eye on any changes because by the time the signs become more obvious – such as limping or avoiding normal behaviours – their condition has already progressed to a more severe stage.



### JUMPING AND CLIMBING

#### EARLY OA

Jumping and climbing is more difficult, e.g. going up stairs or into the car. You may notice that your dog hesitates or is less sure-footed.

#### AS OA PROGRESSES

Your dog may refuse to jump or climb.



### SITTING AND LYING DOWN

#### EARLY OA

Your dog may sit or lie down more slowly or awkwardly, or hold their leg slightly out to the side.

#### AS OA PROGRESSES

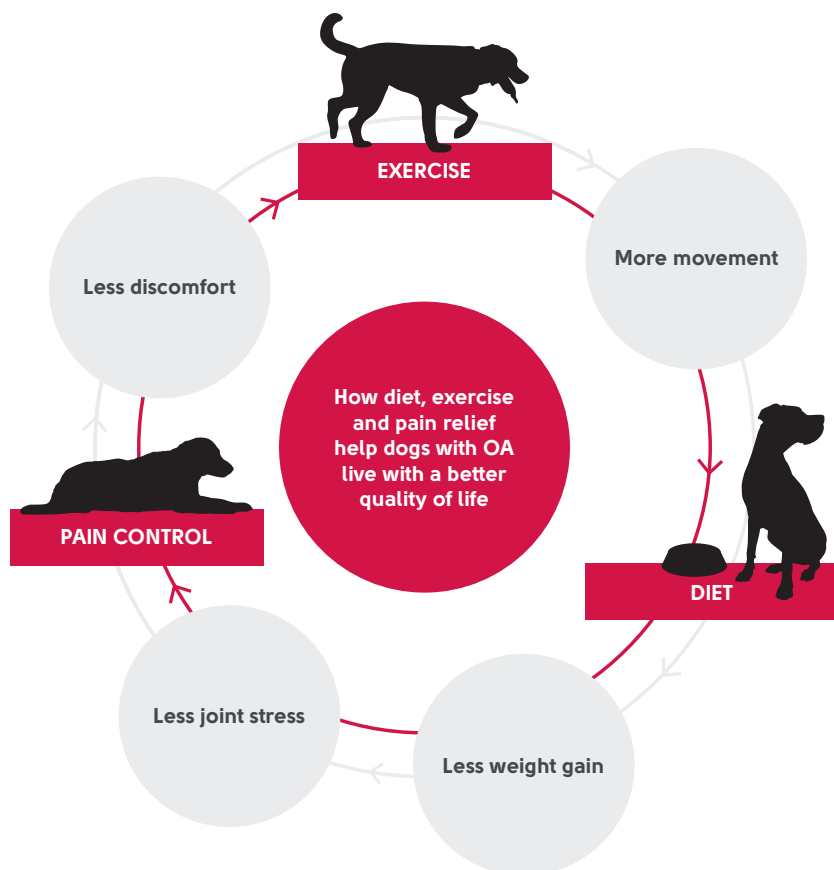
Your dog's movements will become less smooth and they may appear to 'drop' to the floor.

## HOW IS OSTEOARTHRITIS TREATED?

A diagnosis of OA in your dog might seem like an active future is at risk. But starting a good OA management plan early can control pain and help improve your dog's mobility and strength.<sup>2,4</sup>

An OA management plan is made up of multiple treatment options. The goal of treatment is to control pain and keep your dog active for longer, preventing loss of muscle strength, so they can enjoy a better quality of life.

A treatment plan usually involves diet and exercise changes, as well as medicines which reduce any discomfort caused by OA.



### PAIN CONTROL

The only medicines for OA are those which help control pain; these are only available from your vet. They are very important in the management of OA as they reduce discomfort and help dogs to become more active and mobile.

### DIET AND EXERCISE

Excess weight puts strain on joints; it can increase wear and tear and make exercise more difficult. This means that weight management, through diet and exercise changes, is an important part of an OA management plan.

Dogs with OA benefit from regular, low-impact exercise. This includes activities like walking, swimming (including hydrotherapy), and physical therapy.

### AT HOME

In addition to working closely with your vet, there are steps you can take at home to help a dog with arthritis:

- use pet gates at the top or bottom of your stairs
- where possible use pet ramps to avoid stairs, or jumping into the car
- add non-slip surfaces to your floors, such as rugs
- ensure easy access to a comfy dog bed

**YOUR VET MIGHT ALSO DISCUSS ADDITIONAL OPTIONS AND WILL MODIFY THE PLAN OVER TIME, ACCORDING TO YOUR DOG'S NEEDS.<sup>4</sup>**



**BY SPOTTING THE SIGNS OF OA EARLY AND STARTING A MANAGEMENT PLAN, YOU CAN HELP YOUR DOG MAINTAIN AN ACTIVE AND HEALTHY LIFE .**

**PROTECT THE MOMENTS THAT MATTER. TALK TO YOUR VET ABOUT CHECKING YOUR DOG FOR OA, EVEN IF YOUR DOG IS AT A YOUNG AGE.**

**References:** 1. Epstein ME. Today's Vet Pract. 2013;20-23. 2. Lascelles, D. Intl Assoc for Study of Pain 2016 Fact Sheet No. 9. 3. Anderson KL, et al. Veterinary Science. 2020 Apr 28;7:220. 4. Cachon T, et al. Vet J. 2018;235:1-81.

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