



Osteoarthritis

Everyone has heard the term osteoarthritis (OA) or also commonly called degenerative joint disease (DJD) but what exactly is osteoarthritis? OA is a progressive and permanent disorder that results in the deterioration of your pets joints and more specifically the cartilage of their joints.

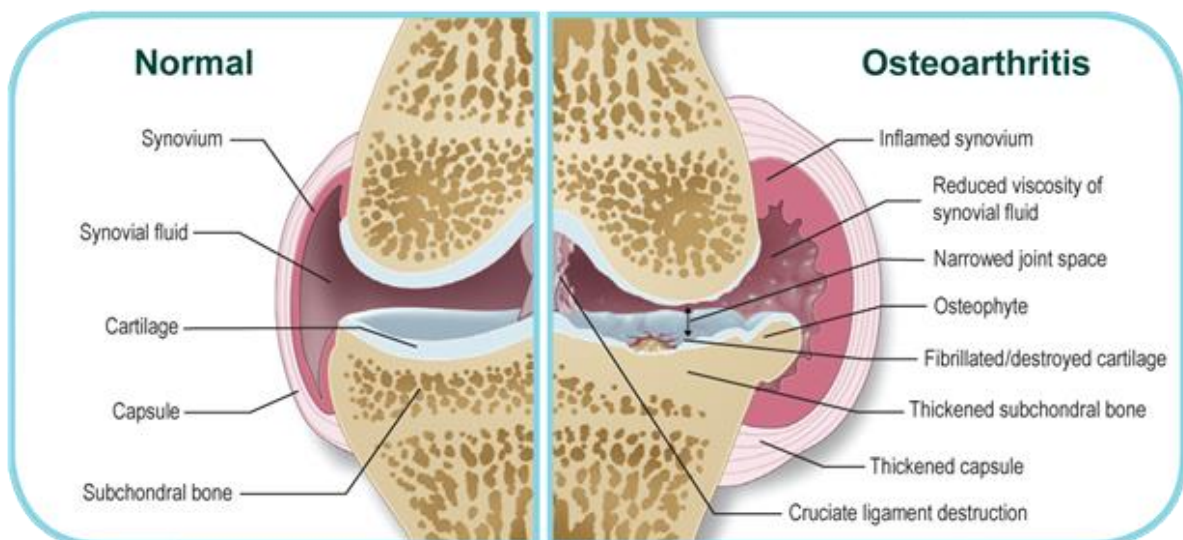
Osteoarthritis doesn't usually occur on its own or be it the primary problem. It can occur at any age and is not just an "old" dog problem. There can be inherited disorders that make OA more likely to occur or to progress quicker. On other occasions your pet may have suffered an accident and damaged the joint which could make it more susceptible for arthritis to form.

For example – dogs that are prone to hip dysplasia don't always have signs of osteoarthritis to begin with as puppies. As they grow and age - it is the instability in the hips that causes the osteoarthritis to develop. Another example is osteoarthritis in the knee – this can occur secondary to torn knee ligaments that help keep the knee stable.

The body responds by laying down new bone to try and stabilise the area. This is the start of arthritis. The body is trying to stabilise the joint but in doing so it causes arthritis to form which will always continue to degenerate as time goes on, hence the other term degenerative joint disease. This process reduces the range of motion in the joint and causes pain to your pet. The pain that can come from OA can cause very substantial morbidity long term. You may feel your pet is just not the same as he or she used to be. OA would be one of the most common problems seen in clinic.

Any joint can be affected – not just knees and hip. Backs, paws/toes and elbows are also commonly affected.

Your pet can be very good at hiding pain from you and the signs and symptoms are not always obvious. Your pet can hide their pain and symptoms and it may not become obvious to you until it is quite advanced.





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Things that you may notice at home – your pet may have trouble rising from rest, may limp occasionally, reluctance to play, run around, hesitate to climb stairs or jump. You may notice an obvious deformity or detect overt pain when a specific area is touched.

20% of all dogs over 1 year of age have some degree of osteoarthritis

90% of all cats over 12 years of age have radiographic evidence of osteoarthritis

A physical examination can give an indication of OA but a radiograph needs to be taken to identify the nature/cause and extent of the arthritis. In many cases more than one joint can be affected.

Depending on the cause of the OA there are many treatment options available. In some cases – surgery maybe indicated to fix the underlying problem. In some cases where surgery is not indicated or viable there are medical therapies to help slow down the progression of OA and/or keep your pet comfortable so they can remain a happy companion for you. Treatment options include pain relief, anti-inflammatories, nutraceuticals, weight loss, chiropractics and more.

If you are concerned about OA or your pet is displaying some or all of the symptoms discussed - a visit with your veterinarian is recommended.

