

OSTEOARTHRITIS (OA)

Also known as “Degenerative Joint Disease (DJD)”

Management of arthritis requires a **multimodal** approach (meaning we usually implement several different strategies to keep our pets as comfortable as possible, while minimising any risks or side effects).

We can think of this multimodal approach as “WEET therapy”....

W.E.E.T.

W = Weight

“Obesity is now recognised as an endocrine disease”

- i. The physical side of it = ‘Wear and tear’ from increased weight bearing through joints
- ii. The chemical side of it = adipocytes (fat cells) release inflammatory mediators (called cytokines), which make the inflammation & pain within joints worse

E = Exercise

Regular exercise helps to maintain muscle mass - & helps with weight control.

Daily, low impact, routine exercise is best.

Things like swimming & controlled walking are better than ball chasing & high impact exercise.

E = Environment

Keeping arthritic pets in the warm (this might mean inside! Or in a nice kennel).

Some pets tolerate wearing jackets, too.

Padded, raised beds are good.

Non-slip flooring & ramps for getting in & out of cars are helpful to creaky joints.

T = Therapies

1. **Diet**: Hills j/d is a prescription diet especially for arthritic patients.
 - There are also nutraceuticals (like fish oils, chondroitin & glucosamine).
 - And remember if your pet is overweight, a prescription weight-loss diet can be extremely helpful.
2. **Disease modifying agents**: Pentosan polysulphate (‘Cartrophen’ or ‘Zydax’) – a series of injections that aim to help to restore cartilage in damaged, arthritic joints.

3. **Anti-inflammatories** (NSAIDs = non-steroidal anti-inflammatories): some brand names include Metacam, Carprieve, Previcox... When needed, these can greatly improve quality of life in our creaky patients.
4. **Analgesics (pain relief)**: such as tramadol & gabapentin.
5. **Alternative therapies**: acupuncture, physiotherapy, massage.

Don't forget that managing arthritis is multimodal... & requires tailoring to the INDIVIDUAL patient.

For that reason we need to MONITOR our arthritis program...

a – Owner assessment is vital! How happy, comfortable & mobile your pet is at home helps us greatly when helping to manage your pet's arthritis. We will discuss this with you at visits, & welcome updates over the phone, too!

b – Regular vet checks, including weigh ins, are extremely useful.

c – Monitoring their internal organs, especially if pets are on ongoing medication or supplements, is both wise & helpful. We assess things like liver & kidney function via clinical exams, blood and urine tests. Bringing in a fresh urine sample when you visit the vet (if your dog permits this!) can be extremely useful, & a big time-saver.

d - Sometimes radiographs (xrays) taken under sedation or an anaesthetic can give us far more information on what's going on inside joints, & hence can help us manage the individual far more effectively.