



**Albion Park
& Gerringong**
VETERINARY HOSPITALS

Medger Pty Ltd
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Osteoarthritis (Degenerative Joint Disease)

Osteoarthritis, also known as degenerative joint disease or arthritis, commonly affects older cats and dogs and can impact significantly on your pet's quality of life. Common signs include stiffness, muscle wastage, a loss of mobility, pain, lameness, reluctance to get up or lie down, and difficulty climbing stairs. Diagnosis of osteoarthritis is most commonly made based on a clinical history and physical examination, though radiographs (X-Rays) are also useful to determine the extent of arthritis present.

Pathophysiology of Osteoarthritis

Patients with osteoarthritis are often stuck in a viscous cycle of deteriorating disease. The process begins with damage to the cartilage lining joints, causing joint inflammation and pain. Inflammation within the joint leads to further damage to the cartilage, whilst pain causes a reluctance to walk and exercise. As a result of inactivity, many patients experience muscle wastage which leads to reduced mechanical support for joints and thus more pain. From here, the cycle continues and osteoarthritis worsens gradually with time.

Medical Management

Management of osteoarthritis is multimodal; we combine several treatments to address different factors contributing towards the vicious cycle of osteoarthritis.

- **Anti-inflammatories (NSAIDs):** these are prescribed to minimise joint inflammation as well as for pain relief. We recommend routine 6-12 monthly blood testing to monitor kidney and liver function if your pet is started on long-term medications. If your pet develops any adverse reactions after beginning medication, please contact us immediately. We may prescribe alternative medications for pain relief if your pet is not a good candidate for NSAID therapy.
- **Synovan Injection:** these injections provide cartilage precursors for the body to maintain joint cartilage health. By improving joint cartilage health, we can minimise joint pain and inflammation. Treatment involves a series of 4 injections given at 1 week intervals, followed by a booster at roughly 6 months.

- **Joint Guard:** this is an oral supplement that contains Chondroitin Sulfate and Glucosamine. Chondroitin is a sulphated glycosaminoglycan (GAG) with many benefits to joint health. Chondroitin has been shown to have anti-inflammatory activity, stimulate production of hyaluronic acid for joint lubrication, as well as reduce cartilage breakdown.
- **Fish Oils:** Fish oils containing Omega-3 and Omega-6 Fatty Acids are beneficial for arthritic patients due to their natural anti-inflammatory actions. Please use a veterinary-grade fish oil product, as human-grade products have a different ratio of Omega 3 and Omega 6 Fatty Acids to those required in animals.
- **Prescription Joint Diet:** Hill's and Royal Canin both produce prescription diets specially formulated for arthritic patients. These diets contain various ingredients such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), glucosamine, chondroitin, and antioxidants that work synergistically to reduce joint pain and inflammation.
- **Weight Management:** weight loss for obese patients is a crucial aspect to managing osteoarthritis, as excess weight leads to increased load bearing on the joint and thus more pain. Hill's Prescription Metabolic + Mobility Diet is the best option for these patients; please speak to your veterinarian for more information.
- **Exercise Moderation and Physiotherapy:** a moderate amount of low-impact exercises such as swimming and leash walking are recommended. This is important to maintain muscle tone to provide mechanical support to joints. Physiotherapy is also available in the form of underwater treadmills. Be careful not to over-exercise your pet as this may exacerbate and worsen osteoarthritis.
- **Acupuncture:** acupuncture may help decrease chronic pain in arthritic patients. We offer acupuncture at the Albion Park & Gerringong Veterinary Hospitals, please speak to one of our nurses or veterinarians for more information.