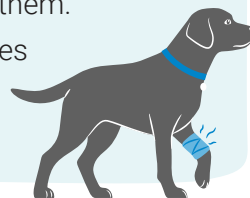


PAIN IS NOT NORMAL (DOGS)



WHY DOES PAIN EXIST?

- Feeling pain changes a dog's behaviour to protect them.
- Without pain, dogs could seriously injure themselves without realising it.
- However, pain isn't always helpful.



PAIN CAN BE A PROBLEM

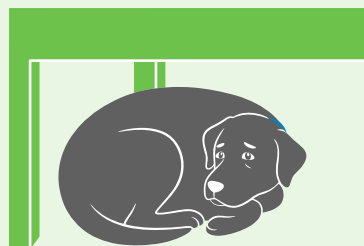
While pain is useful in the short term to protect a dog's body, it can become a problem:

- When it lasts a long time.
- When it doesn't help healing.
- When it affects a dog's quality of life.

Ongoing pain can cause:

- Fear or anxiety.
- Changes in behaviour (hiding, not wanting to be touched, snapping).
- Less movement, eating, or play.
- Poor overall welfare.

This is why recognising and managing pain is so important. These changes may happen suddenly or slowly over time as your dog gets older.



WHAT IS PAIN?

- Dogs can feel pain.
- Pain makes a dog's body hurt. It also makes them feel scared, irritated or unhappy.
- Each dog feels and reacts to pain differently.



HOW TO TELL IF YOUR DOG IS IN PAIN

Dogs do not always cry or limp when they are sore. Signs of pain can be small changes in behaviour, such as:



Moving less

e.g. not wanting to go for walks, avoiding stairs



Panting, shaking, or whining



Limping, stiffness, or trouble standing up or lying down



Licking or chewing one area of the body



Changes in mood
(withdrawn, clingy or snappy)



Changes in sleep or toileting habits



Eating less



No longer jumping up onto the couch



If your dog is **“not quite themselves,”** pain may be the cause.

WHAT CAN CAUSE PAIN IN DOGS

Dogs feel pain for many reasons, including:



Injury

Such as cuts, bites, sprains, or broken bones.



Arthritis and joint disease

Very common in older dogs or in dogs with knee, hip or elbow problems.



Dental problems

Sore teeth, gum disease and/or infections.



Illness

Problems with organs like the pancreas, guts, bladder, or kidneys.



Surgery or medical procedures



Ear or skin infections

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR DOG



1 SEE YOUR VET

Your vet will:

- Ask about your dog's behaviour and daily life.
- Examine your dog.
- Sometimes suggest x-rays or blood tests.

Your vet may:

- Prescribe pain relief medicine.
- Recommend supplements (if your dog has arthritis).
- Suggest a procedure (like an operation, ultrasound or dental).
- Talk about your dog's weight, diet and exercise schedule.



NEVER GIVE HUMAN PAIN MEDICATIONS TO DOGS UNLESS YOUR VET SAYS IT'S OK. MANY OF THESE ARE TOXIC TO DOGS.

They will also help you make changes at home, so your dog is more comfortable. You can ask them about affordable treatment options that suit your budget.

The rest of this handout focusses on changes you can make at home if your pet has arthritis.

2 MAKE CHANGES AT HOME

a. Food and supplements

Keep your dog a healthy weight. Less weight = less pressure through stiff and sore joints. Joint supplements containing Omega 3 fatty acids may help. You can try fish oil capsules at the dose set out below:

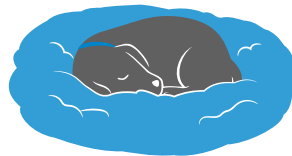
Dog's weight (kg)	Recommended fish oil dose (once per day)
<5kg	Do not use human supplements. They are too strong for very small dogs.
5-10kg	500mg capsule
11-20kg	1000mg capsule
21-30kg	1500mg capsule
>31kg	2000mg capsule

You can also try tinned sardines (give 1 sardine per 10kg of body weight) once per day. There are also supplements you can buy, like Antinol and 4Cyte.

b. Make home comfortable and safe

Provide comfortable, supportive areas for your dog to sleep year-round.

- Make sure there is some padding between your dog and the floor to keep them warm.
- Be aware that dogs find very deep beds uncomfortable.



Cold weather often makes sore joints feel worse.

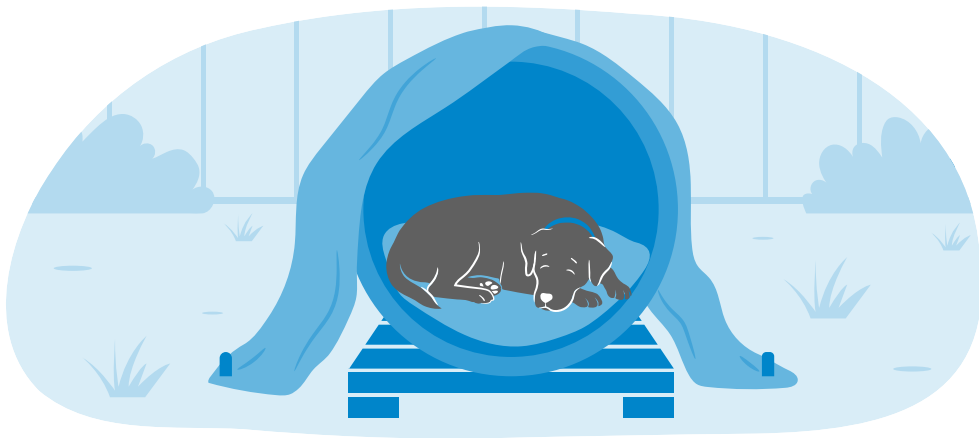
- You can offer a coat if your dog doesn't mind wearing one. Don't force them to wear a coat if they don't like it.
- Take care to make sure beds are not near heaters. These can cause burns or fires.



- Hot water bottles should only be used with care.
- **NEVER** fill a hot water bottle with boiling water. **ALWAYS** put a thick cover over hot water bottles to prevent injury.

Bring yard dogs inside during winter (if possible) to help keep them warm.

- If you can't bring your dog inside, give them a weatherproof shelter that protects from both wind and rain.



If you have slippery floors like tiles or floorboards:

- Add mats, carpet rejects or old yoga mats for them to walk on to prevent them “scrambling”.
- Provide non-slip surfaces in the car and at the vet too.



c. Gentle exercise

Long walks, ball chasing or rough games can be too much for sore joints:

- Try food toys like snuffle mats and licki mats.
- Gentle “sniffari” walks are really rewarding and easy on your dog’s joints. Allow your dog to wander slowly on lead, sniffing everything (safe) that they want to at their own pace.
- Free work is a natural, gentle way to keep your dog moving and stimulate their senses. You can look free work exercises up online or check out some other fun activities here: **Top tip from Sarah Fisher of Animal Centred Education** and our More Than Walks handout.
- Swimming (if your dog enjoys it!).

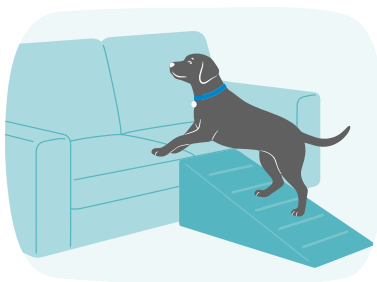




If you have stairs in your home, think about how you can help your dog get up and down, or restrict access to steps. Small dogs can be carefully carried up and down. For large dogs, consider ramps or alternative solutions. You will need to help your dog in and out of your car as well.

Pain changes how a dog feels, moves, and behaves. Living free from pain is very important for a dog's quality of life. Help your dog by:

- Watching them carefully.
- Seeking help from your vet.
- Making simple changes at home.



To learn more about caring for dogs, visit: [Meeting the Needs of Dogs | Practical Guidance for Happy, Healthy Dogs](#) | [Living with Pets - RSPCA New South Wales](#)

