

How can I help with managing arthritic pain in my cat?

To compliment and in addition to medication to help manage your cat's pain, there are lots of things you can do to help:

- Use of soft, comfortable beds placed in easily accessible, quiet and draft-free locations.
- Create steps or a ramp to allow your cat to access a favourite high spot (i.e. windowsill, sofa etc).
- Make sure a cat flap, if used, is easy to open.
- Have a litter tray inside with at least one low side for easy access.
- Make sure food and water is easily accessible, either at floor level or with steps/ramp up to higher levels.
- Make it so your cat doesn't have to go up or down the stairs to access their food, water or litter tray.
- Spend time grooming and cleaning your cat as this may be difficult for them.
- Make sure you regularly cut overgrown claws.
- Keeping your cat at an ideal weight as obesity can exacerbate arthritis.
- Consider dietary supplements that contain essential fatty acids which help reduce inflammation.
- Consider complimentary treatments such as acupuncture to help manage pain.



Consulting Times

Hillock Lane Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 7pm

Saturday
8.30am to 1pm



Blackpool Surgery

Monday to Friday
8.30am to 6pm

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Hillock Lane



Blackpool



Arthritis in Cats

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"where pets come first"

**Hillock Lane
Freckleton
Preston
Lancashire
PR4 1TP**

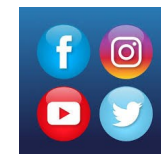
01772 639800

**The Old Bank
369 Whitegate Drive
Blackpool
FY3 9PH**

01253 766352

www.rowanvets.co.uk

admin@rowanvets.co.uk



Arthritis and degenerative joint disease

It is recognised that as humans age, they are likely to suffer from joint pain caused by osteoarthritis. It is also well known that older dogs commonly suffer from arthritis and both owners and vets are familiar with the medication dispensed to relieve their pain.

However, until recently, arthritis in cats was not commonly diagnosed OR treated. This is due in part to a cats' survival instinct to hide signs of pain, and the lack of recognition of the condition by owners and vets.



What is osteoarthritis?

Osteoarthritis is a complicated type of arthritis where the normal cartilage that cushions the joint, degenerates and is worn away. This results in inflammation, discomfort, on-going damage and secondary changes in and around the joint. It happens either due to mechanical "wear and tear" (primary), or as a result of an injury or abnormality (secondary).

What causes osteoarthritis?

It's not entirely clear what the cause of arthritis in cats is. At the moment, most cats with arthritis do not appear to have any obvious predisposing cause and further studies are needed to determine if this is similar to osteoarthritis in humans where mechanical damage to the joints may be the main cause of the development of the disease.

How common is osteoarthritis in cats?

It is quite a challenge to diagnose arthritis in cats so difficult to tell how many cats are affected. Recent studies which involved looking at x-rays of older cats produced some startling results. A study published in 2002 found that 90% of cats over 12 years of age had evidence of arthritis in the limb joints, with the most commonly affected areas being

the shoulders, hips, elbows, knees and ankles.

Can anything increase the risk?

The following may increase the risk of arthritis in cats:

- **Genes**—some breeds have an increased risk due to underlying genetic joint problems such as hip dysplasia, which is seen in Maine Coon breeds but also in Persians and Siamese breeds. Patella luxation (dislocation of the knee cap) is common in Abyssinian and Devon Rex breeds and Scottish Folds are particularly prone to severe arthritis due to an abnormality of the cartilage that occurs in the breed.
- **Injury or trauma**—fractures, dislocation etc. These may cause abnormal joint conformation which can result in secondary osteoarthritis.
- **Obesity**—although there is no evidence that this causes arthritis, it is likely that it would make an existing condition worse.
- **Acromegaly**—an unusual condition of older cats where a tumour in the pituitary gland secretes too much growth hormone. Cats usually develop diabetes as a result as well as secondary arthritis in their joints.

What are the signs and symptoms?

Cats are masters of hiding pain and discomfort, so often do not show any signs or symptoms. They restrict their own activity to minimise the use of sore joints and it is VERY uncommon for them to show obvious signs of limping or pain associated with arthritis. The main signs to observe are:

- **Reduced mobility**: a reluctance, hesitation or refusal to jump up or down. Jumping up to lower surfaces that before, jumping up or down less frequently or difficulty going up or down stairs. Stiffness in their legs, especially after sleeping or resting for a while. Difficulty in using their litter tray or going through their cat flap.



- **Reduced activity**: an increased time spent resting or sleeping or sleeping in different or easier to access sites. Not hunting or exploring the outdoors as frequently and playing and interacting less with people or other animals.
- **Altered grooming**: a reduced amount of time spent grooming and sometimes the overgrooming of painful joints. A matted and scruffy coat with overgrown claws due to a lack of activity and reduced sharpening of claws.
- **Temperament changes**: More irritable or grumpy when handled or when in contact with other animals. Spending more time alone and avoiding contact and interaction with people and/or animals.

How is arthritis diagnosed?

Diagnosis is often based on signs and changes observed by the owner. If changes have been observed it is important to have your cat checked by a vet as arthritis is an uncomfortable and painful condition.

The vet may be able to detect pain and discomfort or swelling at the joint. For a definitive diagnosis, an x-ray would be recommended although not always needed. In some cases if a diagnosis is uncertain, anti-inflammatory drugs may be used.

