

VETERINARY

Q: Molly, my five year old Labrador Retriever, has been diagnosed with hip dysplasia. What can I do to keep her comfortable without doing surgery?

A: While I am sorry to hear about Molly's problem, the good news is that there are a number of different things you can do for Molly to help keep her hips comfortable. In fact, the most effective way to manage osteoarthritis (OA) pain in any joint is to incorporate multiple therapeutic components including effective weight control, proper exercise, nutritional supplements, anti-inflammatory medications, and analgesic medications.



Christopher A. Lindquist , VMD

Of all of these treatments, I believe the most important thing any owner can do for their dog with OA is to control their weight. Just as in people, obesity in dogs is a growing problem in our country. Studies have shown that weight loss alone provides a tremendous improvement in comfort for dogs with OA. Therefore, your number one goal should be to keep Molly lean.

Moderate and consistent exercise is another essential ingredient in Molly's treatment. Many of my patients with OA show increased signs of pain when they become too sedentary. Daily exercise regimens allow joints to maintain a normal range of motion while strengthening muscle. Strong muscles help to provide stability to joints which in turn minimizes discomfort.

Nutritional supplements such as Omega 3 fatty acids, glucosamine and chondroitin are currently being studied for their role in the management of OA. There is strong scientific evidence that Omega 3 fatty acids help prevent the progression of OA in the dog. I strongly encourage all dog owners to consider incorporating Omega 3 fatty acids into their dog's diet. Omega 3 fatty acids are found in fish oil and they are available as a capsule or in prescription diets. While the studies of glucosamine and chondroitin are still ongoing, there is anecdotal evidence that these substances help to improve the comfort level of dogs with OA.

Finally, if weight control, daily exercise and nutritional supplements are not enough to keep Molly comfortable, you should talk to your veterinarian about medications such as non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) to provide her with some pain relief. I wish you the best of luck in managing Molly's hip dysplasia and hope these suggestions will allow you to have many more years of enjoyment together. Thank you for your question.

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