

HIP DYSPLASIA

Hip dysplasia is a malformation of the hip joints which causes pain and lameness. There are varying degrees of deformity in the joint and a hip x-ray is the surest way to determine dysplasia. There are several surgical procedures that can help dogs with hip dysplasia, including total hip replacement. Lesser degrees of dysplasia may affect dogs in later life, causing inflammation and painful arthritis. Older dogs suffering from dysplasia can be treated with anti-inflammatory drugs with some success. One of the least recognized treatments for pain caused by hip dysplasia is acupuncture. It is a painless procedure without any detrimental side effects, and when used properly by a licensed veterinary acupuncturist, the treatment can improve the quality of life for an arthritic/dysplastic dog.



Joint loose
Cartilage eroded
Roughened joint surfaces
Abnormal new bone growth

Before purchasing a puppy from a breed that is prone to hip dysplasia, be certain that both the sire and dam have received OFA numbers or certification from a veterinary radiology specialist on both hips and elbows. An OFA number is assigned by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals in Columbia, Missouri. When a dog is two years old or older (no dog under the age of two years can receive a number), the animal's hips and elbows (if indicated) are x-rayed and the film is sent to the Foundation. The x-rays are evaluated by three radiology experts who study the hip and elbow formations. If the animal has hips and elbows which are normal for the breed, an OFA number will be assigned to the dog. If the dog shows signs of dysplasia, the Foundation will not certify it to be currently free of the disease and it will not receive a number. Keep these facts in mind when purchasing a puppy. You want a puppy from parents certified free from dysplasia with the documentation to prove it. OFA certification does not guarantee that a dog will not develop hip dysplasia symptoms in the future and does not guarantee that the offspring will not develop hip dysplasia.

A number of factors (besides generic ones) can contribute to the development of dysplasia. A puppy from dysplasia-free parents can develop the problem due to improper nutrition. If you own a puppy that seems to have the potential to become a large adult, you may be tempted to feed it large amounts of food to promote the growth process. There is, however, no correlation between the quantity of food and the rate of growth, because no puppy grows faster than a rate determined by its genetic code. Overfeeding produces a fat puppy, and fat puppies are more likely to suffer damage to soft, growing bones than normal puppies. A lean, well-nourished puppy is more likely to have normal bone development.

Exercise can be another factor in bone damage. Puppies require some exercise for proper development and to reduce joint laxity (loose ligaments). Forced exercise, such as jogging or jumping on hard surfaces, and unsupervised play on slick surfaces can be damaging to soft bones. It is best to allow the puppy to play and run at its own pace.

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