



# Feline Arthritis

Arthritis occurs commonly in cats but is often overlooked as cats are very good at hiding pain.



Studies have shown that **60-90% of cats aged 10 years and older have evidence of arthritis** on x-rays.

## What is arthritis?

Arthritis (or osteoarthritis) is a complex process involving inflammation of one or more joints. It is a progressive condition, causing ongoing discomfort and restriction of movement.

Arthritis can be caused by trauma or previous surgery but often there is no identifiable underlying cause.

## WHAT ARE THE SIGNS?

### 1 Reduced mobility

- Reluctance or refusal to jump up or down, jumping to lower surfaces
- Difficulty going up or down stairs
- Stiffness when walking, especially after rest
- Difficulty using the litter tray or the cat flap

### 2 Reduced activity

- More time sleeping, less time hunting or outdoors
- Sleeping in lower or easier-access locations
- Interacting less, resentment of handling

### 3 Altered grooming

- Reduced grooming may cause matted fur or overgrown claws



## How is arthritis diagnosed?

Often a discussion and examination are all that are required to diagnose arthritis. You may be asked to complete a questionnaire to help identify consistent signs. Your vet may want to run blood tests to help identify other problems and to ensure it is safe to use certain medications.

## How can I help my arthritic cat?

Thankfully there are lots of things you as an owner can do to ensure that your cat still has a good quality of life.



### Changes at home:

- Ensure food, water, litter trays and beds are easy to access
- Consider using ramps or steps to help access favourite places
- Provide soft beds in warm, quiet places
- Try a low-sided litter tray
- Make sure cat flaps open easily



### Self-care:

Regular grooming and nail trimming will help avoid discomfort



### Diet:

Obesity is an increasingly common problem in cats and will have a serious negative effect on the joints, as well as other organs. It is crucial that overweight arthritic cats are put on a controlled weight loss program. Your vet will help advise on how to do this and regular nurse appointments will help monitor your progress.



### Supplements:

- Essential fatty acids (found in supplements and prescription diets) help to reduce inflammation
- Glucosamine/chondroitin supplements are widely available and safe to use, though it is unclear how much benefit they provide.



### Medication:

- Solensia: this monoclonal antibody is given once every 4 weeks by subcutaneous injection. It targets and neutralises a protein, which causes pain in arthritis.
- NSAIDs: non-steroidal anti-inflammatories are very effective pain killers, which are administered daily at home. Blood tests every 6-12 months will be recommended to monitor kidney function.
- Other medications may include gabapentin, tramadol and buprenorphine.



### Monitoring

Arthritis is a progressive condition. Regular vet reviews will allow the management plan to be evolved and ensure that we keep your feline friend happy and pain-free. We recommend arthritic cats are checked every 6 months as a minimum.