



What Is Hip Dysplasia

Canine hip dysplasia is a genetic, painful, crippling disease that causes a dog's hip to weaken, deteriorate, and become arthritic. The hip joint is a ball-and-socket type joint. When a dog is afflicted with hip dysplasia, the head of the animal's femur (thigh bone) does not fit properly into the socket (acetabulum). In puppies, normal hips undergo structural changes that result in joint laxity and an increase in joint fluid. Swelling, fraying and rupture of the round ligament follows. Abnormal motion of the hip results in excessive "wear and tear" on the joint leading to arthritis, and hip dysplasia.

What breeds get hip dysplasia?

Hip dysplasia is common in most large breed dogs, but does occur in small breeds and cats as well.

How will this disease affect my dog's life?

Hip dysplasia can be mild and slightly disabling, or it may be severe and cause crippling arthritis. Unfortunately, there is no way to predict how it will develop in each individual pet.

Symptoms of Hip Dysplasia:

- Hind leg lameness
- Swaying or staggering
- Discomfort upon rising
- Reluctance to run and jump
- Abnormal gait

Treatment

Mild to moderate hip dysplasia where there is some pain may be treated conservatively.

- ◆ Your veterinarian will recommend exercise restriction, especially standing on hind legs, for at least 2 weeks.
- ◆ A variety of anti-inflammatory medications are commonly used.
- ◆ A joint supplement such as Arthogen which contains glucosamine and chondroitin can be very beneficial for overall joint health. Ask your veterinarian for more info or dosage instructions on this great product.
- ◆ Weight reduction in obese adult animals or mild weight gain restriction in young animals.
- ◆ Surgical procedures to prevent progression to degenerative joint disease.

Severe cases of hip dysplasia may be treated as above but total hip joint replacement is usually recommended to eliminate pain and restore locomotor function.

Dogs with hip dysplasia should be restricted from rigorous exercise, such as agility training, jumping for frisbees, etc. Treatment, despite the degree of severity, is designed to ease the symptoms and give your pet a more useful and comfortable life relieved of pain.

How can you ensure that your new puppy doesn't have hip dysplasia?

Because there is no cure for this crippling disease, be sure that the parents of a large breed puppy you purchase are OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) certified. Hip dysplasia often skips a generation, so it's even better if you can find out the OFA status of the pup's grandparents.

Because this condition affects the bone development, puppies cannot be accurately diagnosed as dysplasia free until they are 24-months old. Your best insurance is OFA certification of the parents and/or grandparents.

How Can We Stop this Genetic Disease?

In order to avoid perpetuation of hip dysplasia, affected dogs should not be used for breeding. We also recommend that all potential breeding dogs first be OFA (Orthopedic Foundation for Animals) certified as "dysplasia free." Certification requires anesthetizing the dog for pelvic (hip) radiographs. These x-rays are then sent to OFA for approval by a team of Board Certified Veterinary Radiologists. Only those dogs that meet the specifications by OFA should be used for breeding.

X-ray examination and careful palpation will confirm the presence of dysplasia. At Indian Hills Animal Clinic, we often recommend sending your dog's x-rays to a licensed radiologist in Kansas City who specializes in reading x-rays and can verify the presence of hip dysplasia.

What does hip dysplasia look like on X-rays?

NORMAL (OFA CERTIFIED) HIP



DYSPLASTIC HIP



TOTAL HIP REPLACEMENT



What Can You Do For Your Pet At Home?

Please remember that we want to help you provide a comfortable life for your pet. You can help manage your dog's pain by providing a soft sleeping surface. Artificial sheep skin provides a nice cushion and is easily laundered. Your pet's arthritis will also be aggravated by low temperatures, so an indoor or well-insulated environment may help alleviate some discomfort as well.

If you have any questions about hip dysplasia, please call our office for an appointment.

