

HIP DYSPLASIA IN DOGS

Understanding Hip Joint Disease, Diagnosis & Management

Hip dysplasia is a developmental condition where the ball-and-socket hip joint does not fit together correctly. This causes joint instability, inflammation, pain, and progressive arthritis over time.

Large and giant breed dogs are most commonly affected, although hip dysplasia can occur in dogs of any size.

Early diagnosis and appropriate management can help dogs remain active and comfortable for many years.



Hip dysplasia is a common orthopaedic condition that can lead to pain, arthritis, and reduced mobility. Early diagnosis and treatment can significantly improve quality of life.

1 WHAT IS HIP DYSPLASIA?

Hip dysplasia occurs when:

- The hip joint develops abnormally
- The ball and socket fit poorly together
- The joint becomes loose and unstable
- Cartilage wears down over time
- Arthritis develops
- Pain and reduced mobility occur

Hip dysplasia may affect one or both hips.

NORMAL HIP

DYSPLASTIC HIP



2 DID YOU KNOW?

- Hip dysplasia is one of the most common orthopaedic diseases in dogs.
- Genetics play a major role in its development.
- Obesity can worsen signs and accelerate arthritis.
- Some dogs show signs as puppies while others develop problems later in life.
- Early management can slow progression of joint disease.



3 WHICH DOGS ARE MOST AT RISK?

Higher-risk breeds include:

- German Shepherds
- Rottweilers
- Labrador Retrievers
- Golden Retrievers
- Newfoundlands
- Saint Bernards
- Bernese Mountain Dogs
- Large and giant breed dogs

Risk factors include:

- Genetics
- Rapid growth
- Excess weight
- Poor muscle condition
- Excessive impact exercise during growth

However, hip dysplasia can occur in dogs of any breed.



4 RECOGNISE THE SIGNS

Common signs include:

- Hindlimb lameness
- Bunny hopping when running
- Difficulty rising
- Reluctance to jump
- Difficulty climbing stairs
- Stiffness after rest
- Reduced exercise tolerance
- Swaying gait
- Muscle loss over the hips
- Pain after activity

Many dogs show gradual signs that worsen over time.



5 HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?

Your veterinarian may perform:

- Physical examination
- Orthopaedic assessment
- Hip manipulation tests
- Gait evaluation
- Radiographs (X-rays)
- Sedation if required
- Arthritis assessment

Hip X-rays remain the most important diagnostic tool.



6 TREATMENT OPTIONS

Treatment depends on age, severity, and lifestyle.



Conservative Management

- Weight control
- Exercise modification
- Pain relief medications
- Anti-inflammatory medications
- Joint supplements
- Physiotherapy
- Hydrotherapy



Surgical Management

May include:

- Juvenile Pubic Symphysiodesis (JPS)
- Double/Triple Pelvic Osteotomy (DPO/TPCO)
- Femoral Head Osteotomy (FHO)
- Total Hip Replacement (THR)

Many dogs experience significant improvement with appropriate treatment.

7 RECOVERY & REHABILITATION

Successful recovery often requires:

- Controlled exercise
- Lead walks only initially
- Physiotherapy
- Hydrotherapy
- Weight management
- Home exercise programs
- Follow-up examinations
- Ongoing monitoring

Rehabilitation is often essential for achieving the best outcome.



8 PREVENTION & JOINT HEALTH

You can help support healthy joints by:

- Maintaining a healthy body weight
- Feeding appropriate growth diets
- Avoiding obesity
- Providing regular exercise
- Building good muscle strength
- Seeking veterinary advice early
- Following responsible breeding practices

Maintaining a healthy weight is one of the most effective ways to reduce stress on arthritic joints.



COMMON COMPLICATIONS

Osteoarthritis

Progressive joint degeneration causing pain and stiffness.



Muscle Wasting

Reduced limb use can lead to muscle loss.



Reduced Mobility

Dogs may become less active and struggle with daily activities.



Chronic Pain

Long-term discomfort can affect quality of life.



ADDITIONAL TIPS



Hip dysplasia is usually a lifelong condition.



Weight management is critical.



Low-impact exercise is often beneficial.



Hydrotherapy can improve strength and mobility.



Early intervention improves long-term outcomes.



Regular veterinary monitoring is recommended.



EVERY DOG COUNTS

If your dog develops hindlimb lameness, stiffness, difficulty rising, reluctance to jump, or reduced activity levels, arrange a veterinary examination.

Early diagnosis, pain management, weight control, and appropriate treatment can help dogs with hip dysplasia live active, comfortable lives.

