

# How to Tell if Your Cat is in Pain.

Cats often disguise the fact they are in pain. That may be because in the wild, cats that appear sick or injured are vulnerable to predators.

Cat pain can be caused by such things as arthritis, dental problems, urinary tract infections, bone disease and cancer. Pain is also common following a surgical procedure.

You are in the best position to look for the subtle changes in behavior that may indicate your cat is suffering. It's important to stay alert, because the sooner your cat's pain is diagnosed and treated, the sooner he or she can heal and resume a normal, happy life.

If your cat exhibits one or more of these behaviors and you suspect it may be due to pain, notify your AAHA-accredited veterinary practice immediately.



## Vocalizing:

- Meowing
- Purring
- Hissing
- Growling

## Daily Habits:

- Withdraws from social interaction
- Decreased appetite
- Changes in sleeping or drinking
- Fails to use the litter box
- Urinates frequently
- Won't groom or grooms less, looks unkempt
- Sleeps more

## Self-Mutilation:

- Licking
- Biting
- Scratching a particular part of its body

## Activity Level:

- Restless
- Reluctant to move
- Has difficulty getting up from a laying position
- Repetitively gets up and lies down
- Trembles or shakes
- Limp
- Can't leap as high
- Seeks more affection
- Avoids being petted or handled
- Hides

## Posture:

- Generally lays with feet underneath
- Arches back or tucks in abdomen

## Facial Expression:

- Grimaces, furrowed brow, vacant stare
- Glazed, wide-eyed or looks sleepy
- Enlarged pupils
- Flattened ears
- Pants when at rest

## Self-Protection:

- Protects a part of its body
- Doesn't put weight on a limb
- Doesn't want to be held or picked up

## Aggressive:

*especially a previously friendly cat*

- Acts out of character
- Growls, hisses, bites
- Pins ears back

## Don't Treat Your Cat's Pain by Yourself!

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Never administer pain medications to a pet without consulting your veterinarian. Many human pain relievers, such as ibuprofen or acetaminophen, are poisonous and can be fatal to cats.

Different types of pain require different types of treatment. After diagnosing the problem, your AAHA veterinarian will explain the benefits, risks and costs associated with each option. That way, you and your veterinarian can choose the treatment plan that best meets the needs of you and your cat.

Whenever you have a question or concern about your cat's health, please call us!

***Healthy, Happy Pets are Our Business!***



# Signs of Pain in Dogs and Cats

Behavioral factor	Indicators of pain
Change in normal behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of normal behavior</li> <li>• Development of new behavioral patterns (hiding, avoidance of contact)</li> </ul>
Activity level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diminished exercise tolerance and general activity</li> <li>• Reduced social interaction</li> <li>• Unwillingness to initiate play</li> </ul>
House training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Less frequent defecation</li> <li>• House soiling</li> <li>• Difficulty accessing litter box (cats)</li> </ul>
Grooming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased self-grooming</li> <li>• Matted fur</li> <li>• Over-grooming or licking of painful area</li> </ul>
Posture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficulty standing</li> <li>• Hunched posture</li> <li>• Lowered head</li> <li>• Sitting or lying abnormally</li> <li>• Body language or facial expression indicating discomfort</li> </ul>
Response to handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidance of manipulation or handling during exam</li> <li>• Aversion to petting or grooming</li> <li>• Vocalization when painful area is touched</li> </ul>
Pain-response actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scooting, licking, or chewing of painful area</li> <li>• Aggression or irritability when approached or touched</li> <li>• Difficulty finding comfortable position</li> <li>• Circling before lying down</li> </ul>
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limping (dogs)</li> <li>• Bilateral stiffness (cats)</li> <li>• Gait abnormalities</li> <li>• Difficulty standing, walking, taking stairs, getting up</li> <li>• Diminished running and jumping</li> <li>• Reluctance to walk on slippery surfaces</li> </ul>
Vocalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whimpering, yelping, or hissing (cats) when painful area is touched or manipulated</li> <li>• Decreased greeting behavior</li> </ul>
Sleeping habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disruption in sleep patterns</li> <li>• Constant shifting to change limb and joint angles</li> </ul>
Hip dysplasia, hind limb, or lower back abnormalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Abnormal placement of weight on front legs</li> <li>• Placement of front legs under the chest instead of the shoulders</li> <li>• Abnormal wear on front nails</li> </ul>
Acute postsurgical pain (facial expressions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawn-back ears</li> <li>• Furrowed brow</li> <li>• Drawn-back lips</li> <li>• Squinted eyes</li> </ul>