

How to Tell if Your Dog is in Pain.

Dogs feel pain for many of the same reasons as humans: infections, dental problems, arthritis, bone disease and cancer. They also feel discomfort following surgical procedures.

Unfortunately, unlike humans, they are unable to speak to us about when and where they hurt.

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

If your dog shows one or more of these behaviors and you suspect it may be due to pain, notify your veterinarian immediately.



Vocalizing:

- Whining
- Howling
- Whimpering
- Yelping
- Groaning
- Grunting

Daily Habits:

- Decreased appetite
- Withdraws from social interaction
- Changes in sleeping or drinking
- Lapses in housetraining
- Sleeps more

Self-Mutilation:

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

Activity Level:

- Restless
- Reluctant to move
- Difficulty getting up from a laying position
- Repetitively gets up and lies down
- Trembling, circling or lying very still
- Seeks more affection than usual

Facial Expression:

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

Grooming:

- Coat lacks normal shine
- Hair stands up in places

Self-Protection:

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

Aggressive:

especially a previously friendly dog

- Acts out of character
- Growls, hisses, bites
- Pins ears back
- A normally aggressive dog may act quiet, docile

Posture:

- Hunched, with hindquarters raised and front end down on the ground
- Lays on its side

Don't Treat Your Dog's Pain by Yourself!

Never administer pain medication to a pet without consulting with your veterinarian. After diagnosing the problem, your veterinarian will explain the benefits, risks and costs associated with various treatment options. That way, you and your veterinarian can choose the approach that best meets the needs of you and your dog.

If Your Veterinarian Prescribes a Pain Medication:

Do

- follow your veterinarian's instructions.
- watch for possible side effects, including:
 - Vomiting
 - Diarrhea
 - Blood in stools (the stool appears black, tarry, like it contains coffee grounds)
 - Change in drinking or urinating
 - Change in behavior, such as depression, restlessness or appetite loss
 - Yellowing of gums, skin or whites of eyes
 - Changes in skin (redness, scabs or scratching)
- **stop medicating immediately** if your dog shows any of these symptoms and **call your veterinarian** at once.
- keep the drug safely out of reach of your pets and children.



Don't

- change the dosage or frequency unless directed by your veterinarian.
- give any other drug to your dog while it is taking the pain medication (without first talking to your veterinarian).
- hesitate to call your veterinarian if you ever have questions or concerns.

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Signs of Pain in Dogs and Cats

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