

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.

ACTIVITY LEVEL:

- Restless
- Reluctant to move
- Difficulty getting up from a laying position
- Repetitively gets up and lays 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

AGGRESSIVE:

Especially a previously friendly dog

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

POSTURE:

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

VOCALIZING:

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

SELF-MUTILATION:

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

DAILY HABITS:

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

SELF-PROTECTION:

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

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Don't Treat Your Dog's Pain by Yourself

Never administer pain medication to a pet without consulting 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(s) 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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