

Hip Dysplasia

Hip Dysplasia is a malformation of the hip joint. It is a genetic condition that can be affected by diet. There is no cure for Hip Dysplasia; however, there are many treatment options available today for pets diagnosed with the condition. Hip Dysplasia can affect many pets, however, it is predominantly found in large breed dogs such as Great Danes, Mastiffs, St. Bernards, Labradors, German Shepherds, mixed breeds and more. Understanding the condition and available treatment options is important to ensuring that your pet can live comfortably with the condition.

Hip Dysplasia is a heritable defect caused by the malformation of the pelvic and hip joints in large breed dogs. The hip joint is a ball and socket joint. In order to form correctly, the ball and the socket must grow at uniform rates. In some large breed dogs, these joints do not grow correctly or at the same speed. This variability leads to looseness in the joints, the buildup of arthritis and abnormal movement of the hips and legs. Each of these problems can lead to varying amounts of pain and lameness for the animal.

Hip Dysplasia is diagnosed by taking an X-Ray of your pet's hips. However, there are several different external signs to look for if you suspect your pet may be suffering from dysplasia. These signs include: stiffness in the hip joints, hesitancy to stand up from a laying position, lameness, reluctance to run or jump and swaying of the hips when walking. Hip dysplasia is best diagnosed between the age of one and a half to two years. A pet that is x-rayed sooner may not be showing the full signs of dysplasia as the hip joints continue to develop until two years of age in large breed dogs.

There are many different treatment options available for animals diagnosed with hip dysplasia. These options vary based on your pet's pain level, the effect of the dysplasia on his quality of life and cost effectiveness. Your preferred method of treatment should be discussed in detail with your veterinarian. Treatment methods include:

1. **Weight-** Maintaining proper weight is essential in animals diagnosed with hip dysplasia. Animals that are obese put extra pressure on the hip joints, causing pain and stiffness.
2. **Diet-** Diet plays a key role in animals diagnosed with dysplasia. Large breed puppies that are fed special large breed diets that are balanced with nutrients and vitamins may have a reduced risk of dysplasia or may minimize the severity of the problem.
3. **Natural Supplements-** There are many natural supplements on the market today that may help to minimize the joint problems associated with dysplasia. Some of these supplements contain Glucosamine, chondroitin and other vitamins and minerals to aid with joint movement and cartilage regeneration.
4. **Medications -** The most common medications for the pain and stiffness caused by hip dysplasia are NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.) Each of these drugs varies in effectiveness based on your pet's tolerance and pain level. It may be necessary to try several before finding the one that works best for your dog.
5. **Artificial Hip Replacement-** In animals with severe hip dysplasia, it may be necessary to replace the affected joint. The decision for this surgery will often be based on your pet's activity level and quality of life.
6. In addition to total hip replacement, other surgical options include triple pelvic osteotomy, juvenile pubic symphysiodesis, and excision arthroplasty with consideration given to the age of the animal and the degree of joint degeneration.
7. Physical therapy is also an appropriate adjunctive therapy

It is important to remember that hip dysplasia is a genetic condition. Before purchasing or adopting a large breed dog, check with the breeder to determine if the animal's parents are certified free of dysplasia by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA). If the parents are not OFA certified or the breeder will not guarantee the animal to be free of dysplasia, it is best to select another breeder. It is also important to remember that if your pet has been diagnosed with dysplasia, do not allow breeding as the condition could be passed down to the next generation.