

# Holistic Treatment of Arthritis

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## Introduction

It is a common mistake to accept that the increasing slowness or stiffness of an old dog is an untreatable problem. There are many types of treatments, many natural and inexpensive, which can give unexpected freedom and mobility to sore joints.

It seems to be a characteristic of arthritis that one treatment which is very helpful to one animal may be not so helpful to another, and vice versa, so the trick is to try one at a time, then just stick long term with the treatments which help your dog the most. Don't just keep on with a drug or remedy because it was prescribed or suggested if it doesn't do anything at all for your own dog – go on to the next treatment on the list until you find a helpful one, maybe even grade its usefulness as a % and write it in your diary, so you can remember next winter which one helped!

To help you grade your dog's improvement, use the following

## Useful Improvement Indicators:

- Ability to lie down and get up quickly
- Ability to jump into the car
- Ability to go up/down stairs  
(up indicates the rear end function, down shows you how the front legs are doing)
- Enthusiasm to play, walk or run
- Generally more happy and joyful
- Pain or sensitivity on touching certain areas of body
- Ability to voluntarily stretch (the dog and cat yoga stretches!)
- Peaceful sleeping at night

Here is a check list of treatments. Remember to try one at a time for about 3 weeks so you can really evaluate the effectiveness from 0% to 100% improvement using the above improvement indicator list, then note any useful treatment with the % improvement in your diary.

## List of Treatments to Try:

1. Culinary Herbs – mix equal parts powdered turmeric, ginger and cumin then put a level teaspoon every day into the dog's food. Capsicum and mandarin peel can also help.
2. Other Herbs – try a quarter to a half a human dose daily into food of one or more of the following: green lipped mussel, yucca, white willow bark (OK for dogs but not cats), boswellia, corydalis, devil's claw. All these herbs in 1. and 2. have been shown with double-blinded placebo trials to help humans with arthritis comparably to conventional anti-inflammatory prescription drugs.
3. Homoeopathics – use your home kit, which generally is of a 6X or 6C potency, which would need to be repeated daily for up to 2 weeks or so to judge effect. A commonly needed remedy is Rhus Tox, for the animal who is very stiff on getting up from lying down, but actually improves with continued movement. Bryonia is the opposite – the more the patient moves around, the more stiff and lame they become. Calc Carb often fits the large boned, maybe overweight individual who is slow and sluggish. Causticum is good for the once very athletic and intelligent and keen to please dog who now just can't move much due to pain of wasted and contracted muscles. There are many more remedies which can fit an individual with arthritis. It may be helpful to get a constitutional remedy prescribed by a homoeopathic practitioner.
4. Antioxidants – separately, try vitamin C powder in increasing amounts until not quite enough to cause loose bowel motions, vitamin E 100-500IU daily depending on size of animal, co-enzyme Q10 30 to 60mg daily.
5. Balanced natural diet with raw bones and no dried food can help enormously in some individuals – see article on natural diet on my website – it must be balanced with kelp/spirulina/fish/flax etc. Digestive enzymes, bromelain and apple cider vinegar can all help with digestion and nutrient uptake.
6. Weight loss for a pet who is overweight cannot be overstated as a useful treatment for arthritis. It should be fairly easy to count the ribs when you run your fingers over the pet's ribcage. If not, they are overweight.

Maybe weigh your pet on a vet's scales and ask for a weight reduction program. This should include lots of veges and no dried food.

7. Physical therapies such as acupuncture, massage and trigger point therapy (which owners can be taught to do at home), chiropractic and craniosacral therapy, because so often the spine suffers from the unequal balance of an animal with arthritis.
8. The chondroprotective agents (ie cartilage-forming nutrients) such as glucosamine and chondroitin sulphate. There are several veterinary brands which can be bought over the counter at veterinary clinics, which are more suitable for animals, although you can use the human brands from a chemist at a quarter to a whole human dose, depending on size of animal. These take two weeks to start working.
9. Injectable pentosan sulphate, one injection weekly for four weeks, then one injection every few months as needed, is available from all vets and can be a very beneficial and healthy treatment.
10. Prescription veterinary non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs can give great relief to a painful joint in the later stages, and can be combined with natural options, but try the natural treatments first as they will maintain joint and body health for longer. Any treatment which gets your aged pet up and moving is beneficial.
11. Steroid based antiinflammatory drugs from your vet can help a very old painful dog live a few more weeks or months comfortably, but can have side effects in some individuals, so are the "last resort" option.

With very old, stiff animals, it can be helpful to get your vet to add on the prescription drugs at a lower than normal dose after improvements have been obtained from the natural treatments, because it is likely then that a lower dose of the drug will give a good effect with minimal side effects.

The best of all available treatments can then be optimally used to keep your old goddess or warrior feeling beautiful in mind, body and spirit.