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# OA Checklist to aid early identification and treatment

At least 20%-50% of our canine patients suffer from osteoarthritis (OA), and OA is the leading cause of chronic pain in dogs. The first step in managing OA is catching it as early as possible or identifying dogs that are at risk of developing OA. Patients will have better outcomes the sooner they start a comprehensive treatment program.

But too often, clients don't mention signs of pain until their dog has been suffering for some time, and it can be hard to make the time to discuss OA when it wasn't the primary reason for the appointment.

To help start the conversation around OA management as early as possible, pay attention to some of the biggest OA risk factors, including:

- Developmental orthopedic disease (hip dysplasia, elbow dysplasia, patella luxation)
- Cranial cruciate ligament injury
- Joint trauma/ fracture
- Angular limb deformity
- Overweight or obese
- Chronic high-impact activity

Once OA has been identified, create a customized, comprehensive treatment plan, tailored to the individual dog.



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## Use this checklist to make sure you're ticking all the boxes for your patient's OA Plan.

- Owner education:** To get owner buy-in to the treatment plan, they need to understand what OA is, why it's important to take a multi-modal approach, and what pain in their dog looks like.
- Weight loss/ management plan:** This includes specific diet and daily calorie count recommendations per day to help the dog reach or maintain ideal weight.
- NSAIDs:** Make sure to mention that regular monitoring of blood work is needed and provide written and verbal instructions for NSAID use.
- Adequan:** You don't have to wait until end-stage OA to start patients on Adequan!
- Omega 3 fatty acids:** This can be in the form of supplements or diet. Make sure you provide specific product recommendation, dose, and instructions for supplementing.
- Oral supplements:** Pick at least one product that you support or recommend, because your clients will be looking for this information. If you don't recommend something, your clients will find one on their own that could be of lesser quality and effectiveness.
- Activity recommendations:** Make sure you let your clients know both what to do and what NOT to do with their dog.
- Home environment modifications:** This can include treads on stairs, steps or ramps to get up on beds and couches, yoga mats on slippery floors for better traction, and more.
- Therapeutic exercises:** Building strength and muscle can help manage pain and keep dogs active. Start with the basics, such as Shake, Play Bow, and Walking Backward. Make sure your clients understand not to overdo the exercises with their dog!
- Plan for regular rechecks to ensure compliance and modify the treatment plan as needed.**

Sometimes despite all the recommendations above, additional therapies may be needed to manage OA. Please see the handout, ***When to Refer to ASOC and When to refer to SOUND*** for additional help for your patients.



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## When do I refer for specialty treatments ?

When your patients need additional treatment to manage pain and improve mobility, such as surgery, intra-articular therapy, underwater treadmill therapy, or hyperbaric oxygen therapy, Animal Surgical & Orthopedic Center and SOUND Veterinary are here to help.



## When to refer to Animal Surgical for . . .

### Surgery Consultation

- Dogs with CCL sprains or tears
- Dogs with patella luxation graded 2-4 out of 4
- Young dog (<3 y) with suspected elbow dysplasia. The earlier you can refer for surgery, the better (the best age is typically between 6-9 months)
- Dogs **between 16-20 weeks of age** with hip dysplasia (positive Ortolani)
- Dogs between **6-9 months** with hip dysplasia and no radiographic evidence of DJD
- Dogs with failed medical management for hip OA
- Young dogs (6-12 months) with angular limb deformity
- Dogs with instability of the carpus or tarsus



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# When to refer to SOUND Vet Rehab for . . .

## Intra-articular Therapy

- Dogs with elbow OA. The earlier you can get them started on intra-articular therapy, the better.
- Lameness and mobility concerns persist despite patients following a comprehensive OA plan.
- No contraindications for sedation or anesthesia.

## Underwater Treadmill Therapy

- Dogs that are unable to walk or exercise on land without pain.
- Dogs that need assistance with weight loss.
- Senior and geriatric dogs that need help maintaining their mobility.
- *Please note that it may take up to 3 months to get on the schedule to start therapy; which is why it is so important to make sure all of the other OA therapies are being pursued.*

## Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT)

- Chronic wounds
- Orthopedic infections
- Chronic pain (OA or neuropathic) that is not controlled with traditional therapy
- Spinal cord injuries, including IVDD and FCE
- No history of pneumothorax, pulmonary bullae, seizures
- No current abscess, middle ear disease
- Temperament that allows for easily handling



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