

Arthritis: What You Can Do at Home

Caring for your arthritic pet involves paying attention to his comfort.

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If your pet is a new sufferer of arthritis (within a year) and has acute swelling in a joint, he may benefit from the application of an occasional cold pack to the affected joint. Be careful with applying a cold pack since a little bit of cold goes a long way. In fact, five minutes of application should be plenty. Anything beyond five minutes might produce negative effects by decreasing the blood circulation to the joint and even perhaps damaging tissues. A good method for making sure you don't accidentally overdo your cold application is to use a sealed freezer bag of frozen corn or peas. The little vegetables are easier to apply than a brick of ice, they are lightweight, and they thaw before they create any problems for your pet.

(If you are making home-prepared meals for your pet, you might chop up vegetables that are to be included in your pet's daily meals and freeze them in bags for this purpose.)

If your pet protests either the hot or cold treatments, don't force the issue.

Massage Taking pets to professional massage therapists is the optimal option, but even if pets are getting regular massages, therapists often ask owners to perform simple massages at home on a daily basis between office visits. Most often, this is a gentle massage given to the pet's neck, shoulders, and lower back. If you're interested in getting the technique right, ask your massage therapist or veterinarian to show you how he or she wants you to work on your pet.

TTouch Though TTtouch is not a true form of massage, this gentle modality invented by Linda Tellington-Jones has been found to relax muscle spasms and the pet themselves. For more information on how to perform this therapy, owners can ask a veterinarian who is skilled in TTtouch to give them some pointers. Owners can also read Tellington-Jones's book *The Tellington TTtouch: A Revolutionary Natural Method to Train and Care for Your Favorite Animal*.

Acupressure Acupressure is a close cousin to acupuncture. The difference is that acupressure doesn't use needles. Acupressure uses finger pressure on specific areas to unblock meridians of energy, which in turn release endorphins that help relieve pain and strengthen an animal both physically and mentally.