

Think Your Pet Has Arthritis? This Could Make Him Puppy-Like Again

Arthritis is a progressive disease, proven again by the control group in this study. The controls continued to decline, versus those receiving this two-part treatment, which improved their paw strength and activity level in eight weeks. But there's one small caveat.

Reviewed by Dr. Becker

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Researchers at the University of Montreal developed two natural supplements to treat dogs with arthritis. One formula was created to treat the inflammation of arthritis; the other was designed to promote joint regeneration
- Thirty-two dogs were involved in the study. Half received the formulas (one formula for four weeks, and then the second for four weeks); the other 16 dogs were the control group and received a placebo
- The dogs who received the formulas showed improvement after four weeks, and by the end of the eighth week, their paw strength had significantly improved, along with their physical activity level. Unlike the dogs in the control group, the treated dogs had no decline in health during the course of the study
- The two formulas developed by the researchers are not available commercially at this time, however, there are a number of existing natural supplements and therapies that can be extremely beneficial for pets with arthritis
- There are several types of physical therapy that can benefit arthritic dogs. For example, gentle hydrotherapy in a pool or on an underwater treadmill can build and maintain muscle strength and endurance with minimum stress to painful joints

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According to Professor Éric Troncy of the University of Montreal's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, arthritis pain in dogs can be alleviated, with no side effects, by a combination of medicinal plants and dietary supplements.

"While acupuncture and electrical stimulation are two approaches that have been shown to have positive effects on dogs, until now few studies have investigated a plant-based approach to therapy," explained Troncy, who is senior author of a study detailing his findings that was published in the journal Research in Veterinary Science.¹

2 Plant-Based Arthritis Formulas Were Developed

Professor Troncy's team studied 32 dogs weighing over 44 pounds with a confirmed diagnosis of arthritis. Using existing studies with rats, and working with the university's Department of Pharmacology, the researchers developed two formulas:

- To treat arthritis-related inflammation, the first formula contained curcumin, devil's claw, blackcurrant, Indian frankincense (Salai), willow bark, pineapple bromelain, and chamomile.
- The second formula was intended to promote joint regeneration, and included the same ingredients as the first formula, plus omega-3 fatty acids, chondroitin sulfate, and glutamine.

Half the dogs took the first formula for four weeks, then the second formula for another four weeks. The remaining dogs, the control group, received a placebo.

The results were measured using three different methods: the dogs walking at a consistent speed on a special platform that recorded the strength of each paw; a special electronic collar that recorded the dogs' daily activities; and owner evaluations of their dog's behavior.

Dogs in the Treatment Group Showed Improvement in 4 Weeks

Troncy and his team were able to see improvement by the fourth week of the experiment, and by the end of week eight, "the strength of the dogs receiving treatment had improved to the equivalent of a kilo (2.2 pounds) of extra strength per paw," according to Maxim Moreau, lead author of the study.

In addition, none of the dogs in the treatment group had a decline in health, compared with a decline in 36% of the dogs in the control group.

Improvements were also seen in the dogs' daily lives. Those receiving the supplements maintained their physical activity levels, and the group average actually increased from six hours of activity to eight. The researchers were so surprised by these results that they videotaped some of the dogs to ensure their collars were recording actual physical activity and not simple movements like scratching.

Sadly, the dogs in the control group grew progressively less active over the eight week study.

Owner evaluations of their dog's behavior were necessarily subjective. Results didn't reveal a marked difference between the treated and control groups of dogs. The researchers suspect that some owners may have forgotten what their pet's behavior was like before developing arthritis.

Alleviating Arthritis Symptoms in Your Own Pet

While the formulas developed at the University of Montreal aren't commercially available, their study highlights the potential of nutraceuticals in veterinary medicine. The more studies like this that are completed, the more tools we will have to treat painful and debilitating conditions, such as arthritis, naturally.

There are many other natural substances and therapies that have been shown to be beneficial for pets with arthritis.

In addition to a high-quality omega-3 supplement like krill oil, there are several other natural supplements that when added to your pet's diet can provide the raw materials for cartilage repair and maintenance, including:

- Glucosamine sulfate, perna mussel, MSM, and egg shell membrane supplements
- Homeopathic Rhus Tox, Arnica, and others that fit the animal's symptoms

- Turmeric or curcumin
- Supergreen foods, such as spirulina and astaxanthin
- Natural anti-inflammatory formulas (herbs, proteolytic enzymes, and nutraceuticals such as SAME)
- Injectable joint support, such as Adequan and polysulfated glycosaminoglycans

Natural therapies that can be tremendously beneficial to arthritic pets include:

- **Chiropractic care** — Proper alignment prevents your dog's body from shifting into unhealthy positions to compensate for an injured or painful area, which can create problems down the road.
- **Massage** — Massage is an excellent way to treat tissue inflammation and prevent secondary compensation in your dog's body.
- **Stretching** — Stretching your dog can reduce degeneration and prevent soft tissue injury.
- **Acupuncture** — Acupuncture treatments can be very beneficial for some dogs with degenerative joint disease.
- **Physical Therapy** — There are several types of physical therapy that can benefit arthritic dogs. For example, gentle hydrotherapy in a pool or on an underwater treadmill can build and maintain muscle strength and endurance with minimum stress to painful joints. Also helpful are therapies that focus on coordination, flexibility, and balance.

Cryotherapy (cold packs) and heat therapy, extracorporeal shockwave therapy (ESWT), and low-level laser therapy can also be extremely beneficial in keeping an arthritic pet comfortable and mobile.

- **Chondroprotective agents (CPAs)**, which protect the joints, are a must for any dog with osteoarthritis. The type, form, and dose of CPA your veterinarian prescribes will be based on your dog's individual situation. Since each animal responds differently to CPAs, sometimes it's necessary to try a variety of products to find the ones most beneficial for a pet's specific symptoms.

Unfortunately, arthritis is a progressive disease, so it's important to routinely monitor your pet's symptoms and adjust her arthritis protocol to meet the changing demands of her body.

Sources and References

[Discovery News, November 10, 2014 \(Archived\)](#)

¹ [Research in Veterinary Science, Volume 97, Issue 3, December 2014, Pages 574-581](#)
