

Hip Dysplasia at Four?

A large dog of a breed prone to dysplasia can show symptoms at 1 to 2 years of age.

Jon Geller, DVM

Posted: Tue Jan 25 00:00:00 PST 2005

Q. We have a Great Pyrenees-Labrador Retriever mix who is about 4 years old. She weighs around 125 pounds. Lately she seems to have a problem getting up after she has been lying down. She also has trouble jumping into the van to go for a ride. She is our first large dog. Are large dogs prone to these types of problems at this young age? Are there genetic problems associated with Pyrenees or Labs? Do these breeds have a long life? Thanks for your help.

A. Large breed dogs such as Great Pyrenees, Great Danes and even Labs are genetically prone to a malformation of the hips known as hip dysplasia. On an X-ray, you would see an irregular head on the femur (the large back leg bone), and it would not fit very well into the hip socket. This condition can occur in dogs as young as 1 to 2 years old.

I would recommend getting a set of hip X-rays done to evaluate your dog's hip joints. If there is hip dysplasia, it will eventually turn into arthritis, which can be severe. There are some medications which are helpful, but surgery might be a better choice in a relatively young dog. The medications can have side effects and have to be taken for life, while surgery is usually a permanent fix. You should expect your dog to live to be 10 to 13 years old, based on the breed mix. One thing you can do to help your dog is to make sure she is not overweight. Extra weight will make hip dysplasia and arthritis much worse.

Best, Jon Geller, DVM

- Get More Advice From Dr. Geller -