

## Vet Consultation for Arthritic Dog

**Combination of treatments usually works best for dog with arthritis.**

Q. We have a 13-year-old Australian Shepherd. She has some difficulty walking after she has been lying down. Then she seems OK once she gets moving. Would it be OK to give her a baby aspirin once a day with her food?

A. When a 13-year-old dog has difficulty getting up, walks with a stiff gait, or occasionally cries out in pain, you can be confident there is some component of arthritis going on.

If a vet took X-rays of your dog, you would probably see very irregular bone edges near joints, spurs, and narrowing of the joint spaces where cartilage is eroding.

With many different arthritis treatment approaches available, the best strategy is to combine different classes of medications to minimize any negative side effects. Your veterinarian can determine what will work best for your Aussie.

Aspirin, a long-standing mainstay of treatment, is still effective. It is one of the NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) that reduce inflammation and pain in the joint. Like other NSAIDs, aspirin can have some side effects, including bleeding ulcers. When possible, use a coated aspirin like Ascriptin, or a buffered aspirin to decrease stomach lining irritation.

Use the lowest possible dose that is still effective. Discontinue any medication if you see evidence of upper intestinal bleeding -- vomit that looks like coffee grounds or black-colored stool.

Other treatment for arthritis in dogs includes other prescription NSAIDs, nutraceuticals such as glucosamine and chondroitin, and herbal preparations.