

## What Is Hip Dysplasia?

**Learn about this crippling joint disease and holistic approaches to helping your pet live a more comfortable life.**

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Holistic Therapy: Chiropractic Chiropractic care is a system of therapy that attempts to restore normal movement and nerve function to the body by adjusting the articular facets (joints) of the spinal column. The basis of chiropractic is that a subluxation (misalignment) of the spine will create a chain reaction of events. If a vertebrae is even slightly out of kilter, it will affect the nerve it houses by causing direct or indirect degeneration of the nerve, its function, and the blood supply to the nerve. When this occurs, the nerve does not respond normally. An abnormal nerve response can cause pain, muscle tightness, loss of mobility, and a decrease in flexibility. In order to correct the chain reaction of problems caused by a subluxation, a chiropractor or a veterinarian trained in veterinary chiropractic adjusts the dog's spine. An adjustment corrects the misalignment by using a high velocity controlled thrust on a specific joint. Many holistic veterinarians believe that if a puppy predisposed to hip dysplasia is enrolled in a program of regular chiropractic adjustments that continue throughout the dog's life, he may never develop the symptoms of hip dysplasia. In young dogs with emerging symptoms, chiropractic adjustments have been shown to slow or halt the process in many instances. And with aging dogs who have been suffering from hip dysplasia for years and whose hip joints are substantially degenerated, chiropractic care can serve as a sort of damage control, potentially preventing further progression of the disease and affording the afflicted dog some relief. Effects that are attributed to chiropractic care-and that are important to a dog suffering from hip dysplasia-are increased range of motion, a strengthened and balanced neuromuscular system, and an improved immune system. Despite some claims that chiropractic adjustments are harmless, be advised that this statement is true only if the adjustments are being performed by a skilled professional. In the hands of an inexperienced or irresponsible person, an improper adjustment could cause irreversable damage. Do not entrust your pet to just anyone; people have been known to hang out a shingle and proclaim themselves as able to provide adjustments for animals. Preferably, you should seek out a veterinarian or a chiropractor who is certified by the AVCA to perform animal chiropractic. If a chiropractor who isn't also a veterinarian is being used, the patient (dog) must be under the care of a licensed veterinarian. The veterinarian should perform a complete musculoskeletal and physical exam prior to chiropractic care in order to determine if chiropractic is a safe and effective modality for the animal. Adapted with permission of BowTie Press, a division of Bowtie, Inc., Irvine, Calif., from "The Essential Guide to Natural Pet Care For Dogs: Hip Dysplasia" by Joan Hustace Walker (BowTie Press, 1999, \$6.95).