

# Limping and stiffness in cats

## Overview

Arthritis is a very common cause of limping and stiffness in older cats. This is often mistaken for getting old and 'slowing up'. Minor injuries tend to be the most common cause of limping or stiffness in younger cats because they spend a lot of their time exploring.

It's important to take your cat to the vet if you notice any limping or stiffness, or suspect your cat is in discomfort.

## Signs of limping and stiffness in cats

Have you noticed your cat limping? Signs can sometimes be very subtle, and our feline friends are very good at hiding pain. You may notice:

- Limping on one or more legs
- Holding a leg up completely
- Reluctance to jump or use stairs
- Limping that comes and goes (often most noticeable after resting)
- Swelling – either along the whole leg or around joints
- Slow or stiff walking
- Sleeping more than usual
- Over grooming (licking lots at a certain spot, which can indicate pain in that area)

## Causes of limping and stiffness

As an adventurous, and often territorial species, some of the more common causes of limping and stiffness in cats are injuries from fighting. Some other causes are listed below:

- Arthritis (more common in older cats)
- Sprain or strain
- Cat bite abscess
- Wounds
- Claw injury
- Road traffic accident
- Insect stings
- Broken bones
- Cruciate (knee) ligament injury
- Something stuck in the foot or leg e.g. a piece of glass or a grass seed
- Patella (knee cap) luxation
- Septic arthritis
- Muscle problems
- Nerve problems
- Spinal problem (e.g. slipped disc)
- Cat flu (usually only causes lameness in kittens)
- Dislocation of hip, shoulder, ankle (hock) or toe
- Osteochondrosis (cartilage problems)
- A blood clot affecting the back legs (aortic thromboembolism)

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet immediately if your cat has severe or sudden lameness, stiffness, a wound or is in severe pain.

Contact your vet for an appointment if your cat has mild lameness or stiffness that doesn't get better within 24 hours.

If you have noticed your older cat slowing up, sleeping more, being a bit reluctant to jump up or suspect they may have arthritis, it's always best to have them examined by your vet. Arthritis can't be cured but there are plenty of treatments available to keep them as comfortable as possible.

**You know your cat best. If they don't have the symptoms listed above but you are still concerned it's always best to contact your vet.**

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