

Limping and stiffness in dogs

Overview

- Limping or stiffness usually indicates that something is wrong with your dog's legs or back.
- Limping and stiffness can be caused by several different conditions, the most common being minor injuries and arthritis.
- It is important to take your dog to the vets even if their problem appears minor - some dogs are very good at hiding pain from their owners.

Symptoms

- **Holding a leg up**
- **Reluctance to jump or use stairs**
- **Stiffness after resting** – this is a very common problem, especially in older dogs. Stiffness often comes and goes and is usually worse after walks and resting.
- **Swollen legs or joints**
- **Slow walking**
- **Over grooming** – licking a certain spot more than usual could indicate pain.
- **An unusual gait** – limping can involve more than one leg, sometimes even all four! It can be very difficult to notice limping on more than one leg. Instead, you may notice your dog walking differently or looking stiff.
- **General slowing down** – many owners presume their dog is slowing down due to age. This can be the case, but it's always good idea to have them checked by a vet to

make sure it's not because of an underlying condition that would benefit from treatment.

Causes

Minor injuries and arthritis are very common causes of limping and stiffness, other causes include:

Injuries

- Sprain or strain
- Wounds
- Claw injury
- Something stuck in the foot or leg e.g. a piece of glass, grass seed
- Broken bones
- Dislocated joints i.e. shoulder, elbow, hock (ankle) or toe
- Muscle injury

Front leg conditions

- Shoulder dysplasia
- Elbow dysplasia
- Bone growth abnormalities

Back leg conditions

- Hip dysplasia
- Legg-Perthes disease
- Patella (kneecap) luxation
- Cruciate ligament injury
- Achilles tendon injury

Conditions affecting both front and back legs

- Arthritis
- Osteochondrosis (cartilage problems)
- Panosteitis
- Septic arthritis
- Muscle problems
- Nerve problems
- Bone tumour
- Spinal problems (e.g. slipped disc)

When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for an appointment if you notice your dog is limping or appears stiff.

Contact your vet immediately if your dog is in severe pain, is unable to put a leg down or has a serious wound.

You know your dog 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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