

## Limping and stiffness in cats

### Overview

- Does your cat have a limp? Do they seem stiff or painful? Have they started hesitating before jumping-up or stopped jumping altogether?
- A limp is obvious, but stiffness is harder to spot because the signs can be subtle.
- Book an appointment with your vet if you notice your cat limping, becoming stiff or 'slowing-down' with old age.

### General information and causes

A limp, stiffness or generally 'slowing-down' indicates your cat is in pain/discomfort. Limping is often very easy to spot but stiffness and slowing down can be a bit more challenging. Limping and stiffness in cats can be caused by:

- Arthritis (more common in older cats, a very manageable condition that shouldn't be ignored)
- Cat bite abscess
- Sprains, minor injuries and wounds
- Claw injuries
- Broken bones
- Road traffic accident/falls
- Insect stings
- A cruciate ligament injury in the knee
- Something stuck in the foot or leg e.g. a piece of glass or a grass seed
- Patella luxation (knee cap luxation)
- A spinal problem e.g. a slipped disc
- Cat flu (can cause lameness in kittens)

- A dislocation (i.e. hip, shoulder, ankle or toe)
- Osteochondrosis (cartilage problems)
- ‘Aortic Thromboembolism’: a blood clot affecting one or both back legs.

## Signs to look out for

As well as the obvious limp, keep an eye out for less obvious signs such as:

- Stiffness moving around/difficulty getting up and down
- Reluctance to jump
- Difficulty climbing stairs
- Overgrooming an area on their body (often indicates pain)
- Swollen legs/joints
- Walking slowly
- Lethargy (low energy)

## When to contact your vet

Contact your vet for a non-urgent appointment if your cat has a mild limp (that doesn’t improve within 24 hours), is slowing down with old age or seems a bit stiff when they move around.

Contact your vet immediately for an emergency appointment if your cat develops a sudden limp, can’t put weight on a leg or is in severe pain. You know your cat best, contact your vet if you are concerned.

**Find out whether you are eligible for free or low cost PDSA veterinary treatment using our checker below or visit [www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility](http://www.pdsa.org.uk/eligibility)**

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