

Veterinarians are more aware than ever about the significance of pain in animals, and how important it is to treat it.

Many conditions that afflict animals can cause pain. However there are many ways to safely prevent or minimize that pain.



## What you need to know:

- **Pain control can help your pet heal faster.**  
Besides being vital for your pet's comfort, reducing pain can help speed recovery and decrease the likelihood of complications.
- **Pets don't always show it when they're hurting.**  
That's why it's so important to learn the telltale signs of pain (see inside).
- **Give plenty of extra attention and TLC at home.**

Pouring on the love can help your pet's recovery or ability to cope with certain chronic conditions.

## Q & A

### Is it OK to give my pet aspirin?

Despite seeming similarities in drugs used to treat human and pet pain, you should never use a human drug on a pet without the knowledge of your veterinarian. **Simple aspirin, for example, can be fatal if given to cats at too high a dose.** Tylenol should never be given to a cat. Each species has its own unique physiology and metabolism, and veterinary pain medications are carefully manufactured and prescribed at dosages that are very safe for pets when given under the strict supervision of your veterinarian.

### Is it true that cats really purr when they hurt?

Surprisingly, some cats will purr when they are in pain or distress. Painful cats often show few signs of discomfort, other than reduced activity. They may also become unfriendly-hiding, and avoiding contact with humans — or unusually friendly — constantly trying to sit on your lap or get in front of you.

### Will exercise help my pet heal?

For certain kinds of painful conditions, such as chronic arthritis, a regular, veterinarian-approved exercise program can help significantly in the overall management program.

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# Pain Management

Important information about ensuring your pet's comfort



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# Pain Management



## Keeping your pet as pain-free as possible

### The importance of pain management

Just as with people, pain can accompany a pet's illness, injury or surgical procedure. Effective pain management is a vital part of caring for your pet and assuring their comfort.

Pain control can also help your pet recover more quickly, and lessen the chance of serious complications or even death.

### If you think your pet is in pain...

Schedule an appointment with your veterinarian who can recognize the subtle signs indicating that an animal is having a problem. In addition, he or she can use diagnostic tools — blood tests, radiographs, ultrasonography, endoscopic examinations and more — to help pinpoint causes of discomfort.

Pets should be given medications to relieve pain in any of the following situations:

- **Recovering from trauma** sustained as a result of an accident or injury, such as being hit by a car, getting bitten by another animal, or experiencing a sprain from too active play.

- **Undergoing any surgical or invasive procedure**, from simple lump removal procedures to spays, neuters, and major procedures including abdominal exploratory surgery, hip replacements or other orthopedic procedures.
- **Suffering from painful illnesses or conditions**, such as pancreatitis, parvovirus enteritis, urinary tract blockage, arthritis, dental disease, and certain forms of cancer.

### How we treat pain

Frequently, a combination of injectable drugs and either oral medication or a longer acting "pain patch" is used. More aggressive forms of treatment are used for procedures that are likely to cause greater pain.

In elective procedures, such as spays, neuters, lump removals, or tooth extractions, your veterinarian will employ "preemptive pain management." This means medications are given before the pain stimulus actually begins.

### Helping at home.

After any painful procedure or event, you can help your pet's recovery or ability to cope by:

- **Showing extra affection.** Pets will benefit from lots of petting and attention from you, the person they love the most.
- **Making sure your pet has comfortable places to rest and sleep.** You may also want to raise food bowls higher or provide ramps to go in and out of doors or cars.



### How Can I Tell If My Pet Is In Pain?

Many pets who are in pain will not show any obvious signs of discomfort. That's why it is so important for you to know these telltale signs:

- Depression and/or inactivity
- Rising slowly or "collapsing" to lie down
- Walking with a stiff gait, especially after getting up
- Lameness or any gait abnormality
- Lack of appetite
- Unusually aggressive behavior
- Trembling
- Inappropriate elimination
- Unusual vocalizations: yelping or whining in dogs, yowling or hissing in cats
- Standing or sitting in unusual positions.
- Flattened ears or a clamped tail.

### VCA Pet Tips:

- 1 It is frequently best to start pain medication **before** an elective procedure in order to maximize pain control.
- 2 While pain medications are generally safe to give your pet, all drugs should be given under the supervision of a veterinarian.