

Helping Your Arthritic Cat

Arthritis is a joint problem that can reduce a cat's mobility and cause severe, chronic pain. You can improve life for your arthritic cat by doing the following:

- **Help your cat get or stay slim** so that unnecessary weight doesn't increase the load on your cat's joints, resulting in more pain and inflammation. Ask your veterinarian to recommend an exercise program and a diet that are appropriate for your cat.
- Because arthritis is aggravated by the cold and damp, **keep your cat warm and dry**. Padded cat beds can help.
- Apply **warm compresses** to soothe your cat's affected joints. Make sure the compress is not too hot, which can burn the skin.
- Learn how **massage** can increase your cat's flexibility, circulation, and sense of well-being. Professional animal massage therapists are available.
- Ask your veterinarian about **medication** to help manage your cat's arthritis. Never give your cat a drug without your veterinarian's recommendation. Many human and canine pain relievers are poisonous to cats. Your veterinarian may prescribe the following:
 - Nonsteroidal antiinflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), which can reduce the pain and inflammation associated with arthritis.
 - Corticosteroids, which can suppress arthritis-associated inflammation for short periods of time.
 - Disease-modifying osteoarthritis drugs (DMOADs), which can be an important part of managing arthritis.
- Ask your veterinarian about **glucosamine, chondroitin**, and other joint supplements that can be used to help manage arthritis in animals.
- Consider **acupuncture** for your cat. This procedure is painless and has shown some success in animals.
- Consider **surgery** for advanced cases of feline arthritis. Your veterinarian can tell you more.
- Provide your cat with a **low-stress environment**, plenty of **affection**, and **aids** such as:
 - Slip-free flooring
 - Soft bedding
 - Ramps (instead of steps)
 - Help with grooming (regular brushing)

Caution: Many human and canine pain relievers are poisonous to cats.