



## Multimodal Control of Chronic Pain

### What is “Multimodal” and Why does it Matter?

Multimodal refers to controlling pain in multiple ways at the same time. This gives us more effective pain control, while still keeping drug doses to a minimum. Since the majority of side effects are caused by NSAID-type pain medications, keeping drug doses low means minimizing side effects and better long-term health.

### Types of Chronic Pain Treatments

There are many different types of therapies for chronic pain conditions such as arthritis. Typically, we choose various supplements or alternative therapies with minimal side effects first and reserve pain medications for the more severe pain.

### Supplements

- ✿ Glucosamine/Chondroitin: These two supplements are the building blocks for joint cartilage. Although we can't re-grow damaged cartilage in the joints, we can help support the remaining cartilage. This supplement combination is also a mild anti-inflammatory and has almost no associated side effects. It is a great first-line treatment for early arthritis or easy add-on in later stages, and is available in a multitude of forms at various prices. We recommend either Cosequin<sup>®</sup> capsules or Glycoflex<sup>®</sup> chews. Both of these products are specifically designed for pets to be sure the supplements are absorbed in the right dose. They are administered 1-2 times daily, long-term.
- ✿ Adequan<sup>®</sup>: This is the brand name for poly-sulfated glycosaminoglycans (PSGAGs). These proteins are the building blocks for joint fluid. Normal joint fluid is very viscous, making it a good cushion. When a joint becomes inflamed and arthritic the proteins change, making the fluid more watery and resulting in more bone-on-bone contact. By supplying more PSGAGs, we can make the fluid more viscous again, reducing inflammation and pain. Unfortunately, this medication must be given as an injection to work; if we were to give it orally, the body would digest it just like any other protein and we wouldn't see the beneficial effects on the joint. It is given 1-2 times per week for the first month, then once monthly thereafter.



🐾 Omega-3 Fatty Acids: Many people are aware of the health benefits of fish oil in humans, but did you know it's good for your pets too? Specifically the Omega-3 fatty acids are mildly anti-inflammatory and can help to minimize painful inflammatory conditions such as arthritis. Omega-6 fatty acids, on the other hand, are actually pro-inflammatory, so it is important to get the balance right. If you are going to supplement your pet, we recommend supplementing only with Omega-3's such as EPA (Eicosapentanoic acid) or DHA (docosahexaenoic acid). If you have questions about the Omega-3 supplement you are giving, please ask your veterinarian. Side effects of this supplement are minimal; typically the only complaint is diarrhea if too much is given too fast. It is administered 1-2 times daily, long-term.



🐾 Joint Diets: Several of the major pet food companies have prescription diets designed to help protect the joints. Most of these diets are able to make this claim because of the high levels of glucosamine/chondroitin added to them. Of these foods, we recommend Hill's J/D because it has not only the glucosamine, but is the only food to contain specially-balanced levels of Omega-3 fatty acids to minimize inflammation. As with any other prescription diet, the company offers a money-back guarantee if your pet does not like the food.

## Pain Medications

🐾 NSAIDs: This class of drugs includes medications such as Metacam<sup>®</sup>, Deramaxx<sup>®</sup>, and Rimadyl<sup>®</sup>. NSAID stands for non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug; the human medications Advil<sup>®</sup>, Aleve<sup>®</sup>, and Tylenol<sup>®</sup> are all in this category as well. Unfortunately, these human drugs are extremely toxic to pets, so veterinary equivalents were developed. These medications have been a life-saver for arthritic pets for many years because of the convenient once-daily dosing and ability to be used intermittently for severe pain. They are, however, the most likely treatment to cause adverse effects in the form of liver or kidney damage, and stomach ulcers. If your pet is on one of these medications (or aspirin), it is very important to perform regular monitoring bloodwork to be sure he or she is not developing one of these side effects. **ONLY GIVE NSAIDS IF YOUR PET IS EATING AND DRINKING NORMALLY, and monitor for dark, tarry stools or "coffee grounds" vomit as these may be signs of ulceration. DO NOT GIVE ACETAMINOPHEN, IBUPROFEN OR NAPROXEN TO AN ANIMAL UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES!**

🐾 Tramadol: This medication is in the opiate family (and therefore NOT an anti-inflammatory drug), but is much milder than the more widely recognized Vicodin<sup>®</sup> or Percocet<sup>®</sup>. It works synergistically with NSAIDs to give greater pain relief than either medication alone. The most common side effect is mild drowsiness, although some pets experience a paradoxical excitability reaction, becoming restless or anxious. Nausea and other digestive side effects are rare. This medication is typically given 2-3 times daily but may also be used intermittently for bouts of severe pain.

## Alternative Therapies

🐾 **Laser Therapy:** American Animal Hospital is proud to offer Class IV Laser Therapy for our patients. Unlike surgical cutting lasers, this therapeutic laser projects a more diffuse, “softer” beam that provides heat and relaxation to the muscles. It also improves circulation, helps to speed healing of soft tissues, and produces a pain-relieving “endorphin rush”. For arthritis, we treat not only the affected knee or hip, but the entire support structure: both knees, hips, shoulders, elbows, and spine. This helps to prevent compensation injuries in the other limbs and provides great overall comfort. The treatments are additive in effect, so we try to get three treatments in the first week, two the next week, etc, gradually stretching out the time between treatments as much as your pet’s condition allows. As the treatment is completely painless, many pets quickly discover they actually \*enjoy\* laser therapy and will be seen dragging their owners down the hall for their “spa treatment”. We have been very impressed with the effects of laser therapy and think you will be too!

🐾 **Chiropractic Care:** As people explore alternative therapies more often for their own health, the same trend is extending to the four-legged members of our families. Chiropractic care may not be for every animal, but a growing number of clients are telling us the difference it has made for their pet. Dachshunds, basset hounds, and other long-bodied dogs are especially prone to disc disease and back problems as they age. Sore backs can contribute to overall pain and stiffness, making arthritis more noticeable. Although we do not offer veterinary chiropractic at this time,



we can provide you with recommendations for others in the area. Just be sure that whoever you see is trained specifically for veterinary chiropractic – a human chiropractor may be great at what they do, but a four-legged spine and musculature is very different from a two-legged one. The following website lists certified veterinary chiropractors belonging to the American Veterinary Chiropractic Association:

[http://www.avcadoctors.com/certified\\_member\\_doctors/unitedstates2b.htm](http://www.avcadoctors.com/certified_member_doctors/unitedstates2b.htm)

🐾 **Acupuncture:** Acupuncture is also a growing trend in veterinary medicine and has been found to be especially useful in chronic pain conditions. Just as with chiropractic, we strongly encourage owners to find someone who is trained and certified in \*veterinary\* acupuncture. Although owners may be a little put-off with the idea of using needles to stop pain, most animals do not find acupuncture treatments painful or unpleasant. As treatments often last 30-45 minutes, it can become a good bonding time for owners, pets, and veterinary staff. American Animal Hospital does not yet offer acupuncture treatments, but we are happy to refer you to a certified acupuncturist if you are interested. The following websites list certified veterinary acupuncturists in Wisconsin:

<http://search.tevm.com/vetFinding.asp?qtype=state>,

<http://www.ivas.org/Default.aspx?TabId=124>.

If you have additional questions regarding relief of chronic pain for your pet, please feel free to ask your veterinarian. We are here to help you and your furry friend have a long, happy life together!

