



## Osteochondritis Dissecans

### Diagnostic Plan

History  
Physical examination  
X-rays

### Therapeutic Plan

Surgery

### Nutritional Plan

Postsurgically, nutrition adequate for tissue repair and patient growth  
Avoid overfeeding throughout life  
Omega-3 fatty acids to reduce degeneration

## Osteochondritis Dissecans

Your pet has osteochondritis dissecans. Osteochondritis dissecans is a disease of joint cartilage in medium, large and giant breeds of dogs. The disease causes lameness and degeneration of joints leading to arthritis. Treatment consists of surgery to remove defective cartilage, rest, anti-inflammatory drugs and pain medication. This client education sheet will help you learn more about osteochondritis dissecans and will review your veterinarian's instructions for your pet's care at home, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

### What You Should Know About Osteochondritis Dissecans

The ends of bones that form joints are covered with cartilage. Osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) results when the cartilage in joints thickens and no longer receives adequate nutrition. As a result, the cartilage dies and begins to develop small cracks. This process inflames the joint and causes a flap of cartilage to dislodge. The flap of cartilage often floats free in the joint, impairing joint function. The result is lameness and joint degeneration.

OCD is seen most frequently in dogs that weigh more than 50 pounds and are less than one year old. OCD can occur in most joints of the body, but is seen most commonly in the shoulder joints.

### Causes

The exact cause of OCD isn't known precisely, but genetics, rapid growth and overfeeding may all be risk factors.

### Diagnosis

Palpation (examination by touching) of the affected joint by your veterinarian may reveal pain, swelling, and popping or grating noises. X-rays are needed to confirm the diagnosis. Because OCD frequently occurs in both front legs, most veterinarians recommend that X-rays be taken of each leg. Sedatives or anesthetics may need to be given to relax your pet so that high-quality X-rays may be taken. Special X-ray procedures called arthrograms may help diagnose OCD.

### Treatment and Home Care

Medical therapy consists of enforced rest, anti-inflammatory drugs, and pain medication. This therapy may be warranted if the piece of cartilage in the joint is very small.

Surgery is warranted if the condition worsens or if the flap of cartilage is large. During surgery, your veterinarian will remove loose debris and cartilage flaps, as well as dead or dying cartilage on the ends of the bone.

Home care consists of giving all prescribed medications and restricting your pet's activity to walks on a leash. If your pet has had surgery, the leg operated on may be bandaged to prevent swelling and to enforce rest. You should make sure that the bandage remains clean and dry and that your pet's toes do not swell because of a tight bandage. Compare the toes on the bandaged leg with those on the other leg. If swelling occurs or if the bandage is soiled or wet, call your veterinarian. You may need to return to the hospital for suture removal and bandage changes.

### Nutritional Plan

If your pet has OCD, your veterinarian may suggest a dietary change based on your pet's age and body condition, clinical signs and the presence or absence of disease in other organs and body systems. Proper nutrition is especially important to optimize growth and for proper development of the immune system in young dogs. Optimal nutrition should also reduce the health risks associated with feeding excess nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus, which could cause skeletal problems, and excess calories, which could cause obesity. Foods formulated for optimal growth that avoid excess levels of harmful nutrients include Hill's® Science Diet® brand pet foods.

Weight gain due to overfeeding may contribute to the development of arthritis in joints already made unstable by OCD. If your pet is mature, your veterinarian may recommend a special food that helps control weight gain. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® w/d® Canine Low Fat-Diabetic-Gastrointestinal.

Dogs with osteochondritis dissecans can benefit from a diet formulated to help a dog with joint issues. Dietary therapy for dogs with osteochondritis dissecans includes a diet that will help dogs run better, play better and rise more easily while maintaining optimal body weight. A joint diet will have added EPA (eicosapentanoic acid) an omega-3 fatty acid that has been shown to help maintain joint function, enhanced levels of glucosamine and chondroitin to provide the building blocks of healthy cartilage and L-carnitine to maintain optimal weight. Such foods include Hill's® Prescription Diet® j/d® Canine Mobility.

### Transitioning Food

Unless recommended otherwise by your veterinarian, gradually introduce any new food over a seven-day period. Mix the new food with your pet's former food, gradually increasing its proportion until only the new food is fed.

If your pet is one of the few that doesn't readily accept a new food, try warming the canned food to body temperature, hand feeding for the first few days, or mixing the dry food with warm water (wait ten minutes before serving). Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet. This is important because the success or failure of treatment depends to a large degree on strict adherence to the new food.

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## Home Care Instructions

Client's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Patient's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Medication(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Nutritional Recommendation: \_\_\_\_\_

Follow-Up Appointment: \_\_\_\_\_

(Hospital Stamp Area Above)

REGULAR VISITS WILL HELP OUR VETERINARY HEALTH CARE TEAM PROVIDE FOR YOUR PET'S BEST INTEREST.