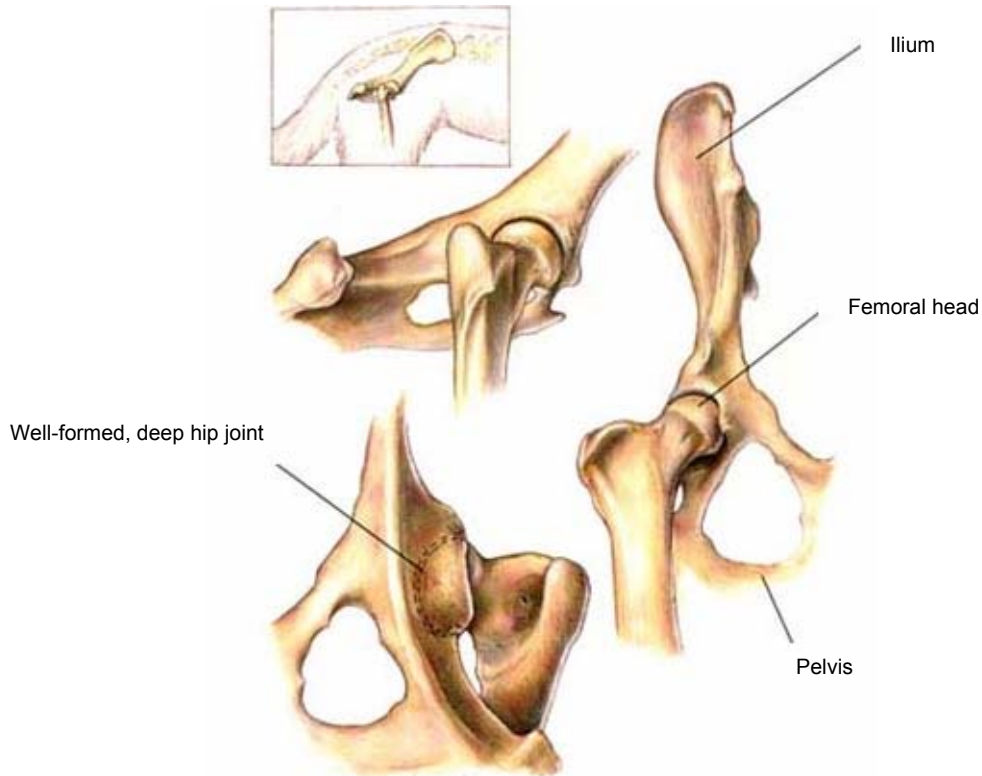




Reducing the Risks of Bone and Joint Disease



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Some age-related changes can't be prevented. However, the signs of many bone and joint diseases such as lameness, stiffness, and exercise intolerance can be prevented, delayed, or minimized when these diseases are caught early and the health risks reduced. This client education sheet will help you learn more about the risks of bone and joint diseases and will review your veterinarian's plan for keeping your pet healthy, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team, as well as follow-up with the veterinary health care team.

Risk Factor Management for Bone and Joint Disease

A risk factor is a condition or characteristic that predisposes an animal to disease. For example, high blood pressure in human beings increases the risk of stroke and heart and kidney failure. The importance of identifying risk factors is that sometimes the risk factor (high blood pressure, for example) can be eliminated or controlled to prevent or lessen the severity of the disease (stroke, for example). Veterinarians also recognize risk factors in pets. The extent to which such risk factors are managed will help determine the length and quality of your pet's life.

Risk Factors

Lameness, stiffness, and weakness are common in middle-aged and older pets. Degenerative joint disease, or arthritis, is the most common musculoskeletal disease.

Risk factors for bone and joint diseases include the following:

- Advanced age.
- Obesity. Excess weight puts added stress on bones and joints.
- Genetics and environment. These factors can play a part in the development of joint diseases such as hip dysplasia.
- Trauma. Injuries to joints may lead to arthritis.
- Improper nutrition. Poor quality foods containing excess calcium and over-supplementation with calcium and phosphorus may lead to skeletal problems.
- All-meat foods. Meats are high in phosphorus and low in calcium. Such foods cause bone and joint problems.
- Disorders such as rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, and inflammatory bowel disease.

Detecting Risk Factors

Frequent and complete veterinary checkups are especially important as your pet ages. Your veterinarian will be able to prepare a list of risk factors for your pet based on the history you provide, results of the physical examination and diagnostic studies, and his or her knowledge of disorders that commonly affect pets of similar age, breed, and sex.

Managing Risk Factors

The care your pet receives throughout its life can help protect its health and minimize its health risks. As your pet ages, you should carefully follow your veterinarian's instructions for exercise, vaccinations, parasite control, dental care, grooming, nutrition, and routine examination and diagnostic tests.

Nutritional Plan

Optimal nutrition is important at every stage of a pet's life to reduce the risks of bone and joint disease. In growing animals optimal nutrition includes reducing the health risks associated with feeding excess levels of nutrients such as calcium and phosphorus, which can cause skeletal problems, and excess calories, which can cause obesity.

Preventing obesity and its harmful effects on joints becomes even more important as a pet ages. Optimal nutrition for middle-aged and older pets, therefore, includes avoiding excess calories, but also excess sodium, protein, and phosphorus to reduce the risks of hypertension and kidney disease and failure. Foods that avoid these harmful excesses and provide proper nutrition for each life stage include Hill's® Science Diet® Puppy, Large Breed Puppy, Adult, and Senior for dogs and Science Diet® Kitten, Adult, and Senior for cats.

If your pet is prone to weight gain, your veterinarian may recommend an increased-fiber, reduced-calorie food such as Hill's® Science Diet® Light for dogs and cats.

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). However, do not add water to your cat's food. Feed only the recommended food. Be patient but firm with your pet.

Presented as an educational service by



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.