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Treating Pain In Your Dog: Keeping Your Best Friend Active, Safe, And Pain Free

What are NSAIDs?

NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) help control inflammation, swelling, stiffness, and joint pain. They work by blocking the production of prostaglandins, chemicals produced by the body that cause inflammation. These pain relievers are used sometimes for acute pain, for example following surgery or an injury, or for chronic pain like arthritis. The NSAID medications that we use at Family Pet are:

- *RIMADYL* (carprofen)
- *METACAM* (meloxicam)
- *PREVICOX* (firocoxib)
- *ZUBRIN* (tepoxalin)

* *Duralactin*, a non-NSAID anti-inflammatory pain reliever, is sometimes used along with these (or used instead in patients with liver or kidney problems.) Similarly used are other non-NSAID pain relievers like *tramadol* and *amantadine*, which can be used in addition to NSAIDs.

What should you watch for?

Most NSAID side effects are mild, but some can be serious including kidney and liver damage, and gastrointestinal ulcers. Watch your dog carefully for:

- Decreased appetite
- Lethargy, depression, changes in behavior
- Vomiting, diarrhea, or black tar-colored stool
- Yellowing of gums, skin, or the whites of the eyes
- Increased thirst and/or urination
- **NOTE:** Some NSAIDs come in a chewable form, which makes them easy to administer but also tempting for your dog to eat. **Be careful to not leave the bottle where your pet can reach it!** NSAID overdose is a common toxicity!

What you should think about before giving your dog an NSAID:

- Never give aspirin or corticosteroids (like prednisone or Temaril-P) along with an NSAID.
- In dogs with kidney, liver, heart and intestinal problems, NSAIDs are rarely used. When prescribed, their use should be approached cautiously.
- Don't assume an NSAID for one dog is safe to give to another dog. **Always consult your veterinarian before using any medication in your pet.**
- **Never give the prescribed NSAID if your dog is dehydrated (vomiting, diarrhea, etc.)**
- **Never switch from one NSAID to another without consulting your veterinarian, and NEVER give one along with any other.**

OVER→

Long-term NSAID use

- When your veterinarian prescribes the chronic use of an NSAID, blood tests will be required first to check organ function (CBC/Chemistry.) Recheck blood work will be needed 2-4 weeks later to look for immediate side effects, and again every 4-6 months to check for long-term cumulative effects.

Complementary treatment options include:

- Weight loss in an overweight dog. Maintaining lean body weight is key.
- j/d diet (Hill's brand veterinary prescription food)
- Dietary supplements such as Cosequin, Adequan, omega-3 fatty acids
- Physical therapy, including laser therapy and underwater treadmill
- Acupuncture and chiropractic medicine
- Stem-cell and Gel Core Matrix – Newly available therapies intended to improve arthritic joints. They require 1-2 anesthetic procedures and range in price from \$600 to \$2500, but may be worth investigating for your pet.

While these treatment options are targeted to dogs, many of them can apply to cats. Studies have shown that up to 90% of cats over the age of 10 have arthritis. Our feline friends do not show us overt signs of arthritis like our canine companions do, but if you notice that your cat is jumping less, grooming less, hiding, or walking differently, please ask your veterinarian which of these therapies might be appropriate.