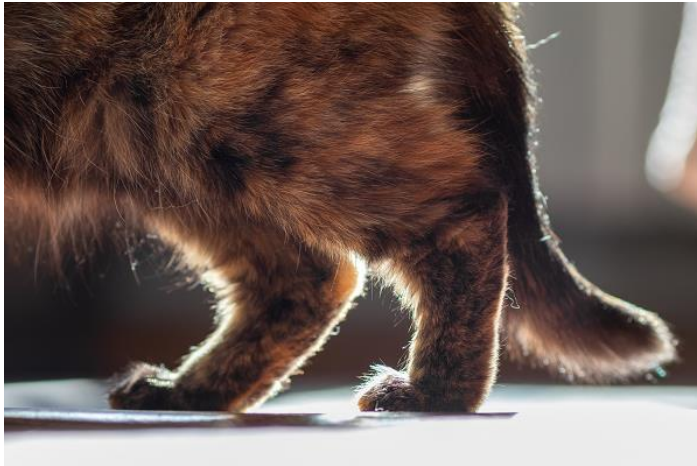


Nutraceuticals for Joint Support in Cats with Osteoarthritis

What causes OA in cats?



The causes of OA in cats are many and varied. There may be genetic causes, predispositions, or a traumatic injury that leads to OA. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of OA by repetitive overloading of the joints and the inflammatory effect of body fat, leading to damage over time.

Your veterinarian is the best source for a comprehensive OA management plan. If your cat is overweight or obese, that is where to start, but there is much more that can be done to help support the joints of a cat with OA. In addition to diet modifications, exercise, weight loss, and medications, joint support nutraceuticals are also helpful in an OA management program.

What are nutraceuticals?

The word nutraceutical combines the words nutrition and pharmaceutical. A nutraceutical is a food or food product that reportedly provides health and/or medical benefits. Nutraceuticals are often presented as compounds that can protect against chronic disease. Nutraceuticals may contain isolated nutrients, dietary supplements, or herbal products. Another definition of a nutraceutical is a fortified food or dietary supplement that provides health benefits.

"Nutraceuticals are not subjected to the same testing and regulation as

pharmaceuticals."

Nutraceuticals are not subjected to the same testing and regulation as pharmaceuticals. For this reason, healthy skepticism is a good idea when considering nutraceuticals for your cat. Investigators are conducting clinical studies to evaluate the role of certain nutraceuticals in helping cats

with OA. Your veterinarian can advise you on nutraceuticals that have been evaluated and have yielded positive effects.

Which nutraceuticals might help my cat with OA?

Several nutraceuticals have shown positive results in managing OA. If your cat is a good candidate for any of these nutraceuticals, your veterinarian can help you make a good choice regarding a reputable manufacturer, dosage, and formulation.

One important strategy for interrupting the progression of OA is to choose a diet that has been evaluated in clinical trials to help cats with OA. A joint support diet is rich in the omega-3 fatty acid **eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA)**, which helps control joint inflammation and blocks the enzymes that break down cartilage.

Research shows that high levels of EPA help to stop cartilage from degenerating. EPA can also be delivered as a supplement, either in liquid or capsule form. There are several reputable manufacturers of diets rich in omega-3 fatty acids for pets (e.g., Hills® Prescription Diet j/d® and Royal Canin® Mobility Support). Findings from human studies suggest that omega-3 fatty acids may provide additional benefits beyond joint support; however, more research needs to be performed to determine if the same benefits apply to cats.

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Green-lipped mussel from New Zealand is a source of another beneficial omega-3 fatty acid, eicosatetraenoic acid (ETA), glycosaminoglycans, and other beneficial nutrients. Studies have shown reduced orthopedic pain with its use.

Undenatured Collagen Type II helps to reduce ongoing joint damage that occurs secondary to the immune system's overreaction to arthritic changes in the joint.

Microlactin is a milk protein extracted from the milk of cows that inhibits inflammation regardless of the cause of that inflammation. Research supports the use of microlactin in cats with osteoarthritis. OA has an inflammatory component, which is why nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) are essential in managing the condition. Microlactin works differently in the body than NSAIDs and corticosteroids, with no evidence of gastrointestinal irritation or kidney compromise.

Incorporating microlactin into an OA management plan may help counteract the inflammation of OA while decreasing the side effects that are common with NSAIDs. This may allow your veterinarian to decrease or even discontinue the use of NSAIDs. It takes about two weeks for microlactin to have maximal effects, so veterinarians generally overlap microlactin and NSAIDs for two to three weeks before decreasing the NSAID dose.

Despite the popularity of **glucosamine/chondroitin** supplements, research to support definitive benefits is lacking. That said, low-molecular-weight chondroitin appears to affect some cats positively. Unfortunately, not all individuals will benefit from this supplement. It may be worth considering a trial treatment using a supplement with low-molecular-weight chondroitin.

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Avocado and soybean unsaponifiable (ASU) are an extract from avocado and soybean oils. ASU complements the effects of glucosamine and low-molecular-weight chondroitin. It appears to reduce inflammation involved in cartilage degeneration and has been shown to affect feline OA patients positively.

Can I get nutraceuticals/supplements for my cat at my health food store or pharmacy?

Despite the interest and research in the role of nutrition and nutraceuticals in pets, a full understanding of these complex factors and relationships is still in its infancy. The preliminary science of nutraceutical use in cats with OA is very exciting, but care needs to be taken to follow the data as much as possible.

Your veterinarian is your best partner when choosing the most appropriate nutritional profile and supplements for your cat with OA and can recommend where to purchase them. It is important to discuss supplement use with your veterinarian as some can be harmful to your cat, and some may interact with other medications your cat is taking.

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