

3 Major Mistakes That Could Cause Joint Disease In Your Dog



By: [Julia Henriques](#)

As dogs age, many of them start to suffer from joint disease (like hip dysplasia). You may see your older dog moving around stiffly, struggling to get up, or not able to zoom upstairs or jump in the car like she used to.

And it's not just the seniors either. Younger and younger dogs are getting diseases like hip dysplasia or elbow dysplasia and knee problems like luxating patellas or cruciate ligament tears.

And you probably think there's not much you can do to prevent these problems from happening.

Sure, you can give your dog supplements that might slow down joint degeneration. And you can ease any pain or discomfort with herbal or homeopathic remedies ...

... but if she's destined for joint problems, you probably assume nothing you can do is going to stop them from happening.

But what if that's wrong?

What if you could help your dog avoid joint disease?

3 Common Mistakes

Read on to learn about three common mistakes dog owners make that can contribute to joint disease in their dogs.

Avoid these mistakes and you could have a dog with healthy joints and good mobility for years to come.

Mistake # 1: Over-Vaccinating – Especially For Distemper

There are several studies that point to vaccination, and especially distemper vaccination, as a major culprit in causing joint issues in dogs. Here are just a few of them.

- The Canine Health Concern's 1997 study of 4,000 dogs showed a high number of dogs developing mobility problems shortly after they were vaccinated.
- Veterinarian Dr Jean Dodds has also observed delayed adverse effects of vaccines of "canine distemper antibodies in joint diseases of dogs."
- The Veterinary Products Committee (VPC) Working Group on Feline and Canine Vaccination has noted "*...evidence that canine distemper virus (and possibly vaccines) may be involved in canine rheumatoid-like arthritis through the formation of immune complexes.*"
- In 1999, in a well-known study at Purdue University, puppies received rabies shots and the usual cocktail of core and non-core vaccines. The authors found that the vaccinated but not the unvaccinated puppies developed autoantibodies to their own collagen. A follow-up study noted similar results in dogs that had just the rabies vaccine or just the multivalent vaccine.

The vaccinated dogs in this study were literally destroying their own collagen!

- In a 1989 study, Bari et al found anti-collagen complexes in all joint disorders in dogs. They found autoimmunity to collagen in 72.4% of dogs with rheumatoid arthritis, 88% of dogs with infective arthritis and 52% of dogs with osteoarthritis. Dogs with cruciate disease also had increased autoantibody levels. They also had higher levels of anti-collagen antibodies in the synovial fluid (which surrounds joints).

Healthy Collagen Is Important

Collagen is the elastic protein that holds skin together. It also makes up 70% to 90% of our muscles, tendons, ligaments and other joint supporting tissues. When collagen breaks down in the body, the joints become less stable, the muscles and connective tissue loosen and become more brittle, and joint disorders start to occur.

Collagen not only protects joint cartilage, it also protects tendons and ligaments against tears.

So when you understand that vaccination damages collagen, it makes sense to limit your dog's vaccinations to help her avoid joint disease and injury in the future.

One Distemper Vaccination Is Enough!

In the case of distemper, repeated vaccinations are completely unnecessary.

Veterinary immunologist Dr Ronald Schultz did a study where he vaccinated puppies with one dose of distemper vaccine. Just four hours later he placed them in a room with distemper-infected dogs. None of the puppies caught distemper ... all of them were protected from that one shot!

And Dr Schutz had already proved many years earlier that protection from core vaccines (including distemper) lasts at least seven years, and most likely for the life of the dog.

So once your puppy has been vaccinated against distemper, there's no reason to keep repeating this vaccination for the rest of her life.

Yet many veterinarians continue to recommend distemper shots for your dog over and over again. They'll vaccinate at 8, 12 and 16 weeks as a puppy, and then year after year (or at least every three years) for the rest of her life.

So, remember that one properly timed distemper vaccination is enough! Don't risk harming your dog's joints by giving more.

Mistake # 2: Early Spaying Or Neutering

Spay/neuter is always a controversial topic but it's an important one, because it can have a major effect on your dog's joint health.

When puppies are spayed or neutered before they're fully grown, they lose the sex hormones that regulate normal growth.

In each long bone, dogs have a band of cartilage near the joint, known as a growth (epiphyseal) plate. This plate builds bone as your puppy develops and gets larger and taller. Once your puppy reaches maturity, the growth plate closes and your puppy reaches his full height.

There are several studies showing that the risk of joint disease is much higher if your puppy is sterilized before the growth plates close. Growth plates close at different times depending on the size of your dog and in giant breeds can be as late as 2 years old.

Sterilizing your dog too early can mean higher risk of joint diseases like hip and elbow dysplasia, cranial cruciate tears or patellar luxation. [Read about studies](#) that show the increased effects of early sterilization on these all-too common joint disorders.

Certain breeds are also more prone to these risks.

[A 2014 study by Hart BL et al](#) compared the effects of early sterilization on Golden Retrievers vs Labrador Retrievers. The results showed that in Golden Retrievers, neutering at under 6 months increased the incidence of joint disorders to 4 or 5 times that of intact dogs,

whereas in the Labrador Retrievers, neutering only doubled the incidence of joint disorders in both sexes.

[And a new study published in 2016](#) found that sterilizing German Shepherds under 1 year old increased the incidence of joint disorders from 7% to 21% in males, and from 5% to 16% in females.

Spaying or neutering your dog is a personal decision involving many different factors. But if you do decide to sterilize your dog, you can do a lot to protect against joint problems by waiting until he's fully grown.

Mistake # 3: Ignoring Your Dog's Gut Health

You've probably heard quite a lot about the importance of your dog's gut health in preventing conditions like food allergies and intolerances or irritable bowel disease. That makes sense ... after all, they're all diseases related to the digestive system.

But did you know that an unhealthy gut can cause inflammation throughout the body and also contribute to joint disease?

So when you see your Golden Retriever start getting stiff and limpy in middle age, you might just chalk it up to arthritis as part of the aging process, especially in a breed that's predisposed to having joint issues.

But your dog's arthritis symptoms could just be one of the common signs of Leaky Gut Syndrome. Leaky Gut can cause many health disorders. Early onset of joint disease can be one of them.

Note: when your dog's gut isn't healthy, your dog isn't healthy. Click the image below to download DNM's [free Leaky Gut Guide + Workbook](#) and heal your dog from the inside out.

What Is Leaky Gut?

Leaky Gut syndrome is when the lining of the digestive tract known as the intestinal mucosa becomes weakened. Its usual job is to allow nutrients into the blood stream and protect the body from larger, harmful particles.

With Leaky Gut, the lining will allow things like bad bacteria, undigested food particles and toxic waste to leak into the blood stream.

This can damage the immune system and cause overall inflammation in the body. Joint disease can be just one of many possible Leaky Gut symptoms.

If it's Leaky Gut

It can be hard to diagnose Leaky Gut because it can cause so many different diseases. If your dog also shows other signs of Leaky Gut like allergies, skin issues or digestive issues, it could mean Leaky Gut is also causing your dog's joint issues.

A healthy gut is important, no matter what. So taking steps to improve your dog's gut health is always a good idea.

Here are a few things you can do to start healing your dog's gut:

- Feed a species appropriate, whole food based diet
- Minimize vaccines
- Use natural healthcare remedies and pest preventives instead of pharmaceutical products
- Give your dog a good probiotic supplement to provide "good" bacteria to help balance gut health

You Have Some Control

So, is joint disease just due to bad luck or bad genes? Not necessarily.

Of course, if you adopt your dog from a shelter or rescue, she's probably been spayed and vaccinated. But you have control over her future care ... including just saying no to that unnecessary distemper vaccine.

And if you're lucky enough to get your dog as a puppy, her risk of joint disease is not just a matter of fate. Because now you know about three things you can do that can really help reduce that risk!

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Bodhi from Rene's first Litter