

Hip dysplasia in dogs is a disease that can affect pets of all ages with severe and crippling lameness. This condition is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. In cases of hip dysplasia, the joint loosens and becomes overly elastic. The ball will come out of the socket repeatedly, forming scar tissue over time and leading to what can be very severe arthritis.

Symptoms

Breeds that are especially at risk for hip dysplasia include Retrievers, Rottweilers, Shepherds Pitbulls and Bulls. Most pets will experience it in both hips. The age of onset for symptoms can vary from just a few months of age to well into their senior years.

Signs of hip dysplasia include:

- Pain and stiffness in the rear legs
- Difficulty rising to standing, walking and playing
- 'Bunny hopping' gait

Diagnosis

We diagnose hip dysplasia through a combination of physical examination and x-rays. We may need to perform the exam under anesthesia to determine an accurate diagnosis, particularly in puppies. Earlier diagnosis means more options for treatments.

Treatment

Treatments for hip dysplasia can vary from medical to full surgical interventions, depending on the stage of the disease. Non-surgical options include rest, helping the pet maintain a healthy weight, diet and supplements, physical therapy (including acupuncture), stem cell therapy and medications to control inflammation and relieve pain. However, only surgery can address the source of the problem.

Juvenile Pubic Symphysiodesis

For young hip dysplasia patients, we may perform a juvenile pubic symphysiodesis. This procedure uses alectro-cautery to alter the alignment of the pelvis to protect the joint from coming out of the socket. The surgery can protect your pet from hip dysplasia for the remainder of their life, but it must be performed in the first few months of life.

Pelvic Osteotomy

A pelvic osteotomy may be performed on a younger dog that does not yet have degeneration of the hip joint. It can help reverse the overly elastic nature of the joint. The surgeon rearranges the hip joint so that it is more firmly placed into the joint and then attaches it via a bone plate and screws. This stabilizes the joint and prevents pain.

Femoral Head & Neck Excision

If the disease has already progressed to the point of irreversible damage to the joint, the surgeon can remove the femoral head and neck (the ball of the joint). During healing, a false joint is created. Keep in mind that while this will relieve pain, it may produce a limp or altered gait.

Total Hip Replacement

A total hip replacement works much like it does in humans. The diseased joint is replaced with one made of a polyethylene socket and stainless steel ball or similar porous coated components. These replacements are considered very stable and durable when successful.

Conclusion

Please keep in mind that early diagnosis and swift treatment is critical for successful treatments of hip dysplasia. We will discuss all the available options for your pet and potential outcomes to find the best fit for your companion.