

## “ARTHRITIS REVISITED”

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Q. My dog has arthritis. I want to give her pain medicine, but I'm afraid of what I have heard about the drug Rimadyl. What are the alternatives, and can I mix these medicines?

A few weeks ago we covered arthritis treatments in fairly complete detail. Let's go over the major points again. Arthritis or inflammation of the joints involves swelling, redness, heat, and soreness or stiffness of the joint. There may be cartilage breakdown of the smooth anti-friction inner surfaces of the joint where the bones slide over each other. There are many ways to treat arthritis, the most common being anti-inflammatory drugs. Many of these drugs can have side effects which can in some cases become worse than the disease for which the medicines were given. The class of drugs from which Rimadyl comes is called an NSAID which means non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug. The newer NSAIDS have advantages over aspirin by not having gastrointestinal (stomach) bleeding. Rimadyl and the NSAIDS do have some side effects. While they are easier on the GI system there can be liver and kidney effects that are every bit as bad as the over-use of Tylenol or Ibuprofen. Dogs can benefit immensely from Rimadyl and its allies, Etogesic and Derramax. It makes the arthritis pain more tolerable. It can give them their quality of life back. One can never promise (no) side effects, and in some dogs these can be disastrous and even life threatening, but for the majority of dogs they are minimal, or seemingly non-existent.

Dr. Doug has treated a lot of arthritis with drugs, but prefers to use these chemicals only after all the more natural therapies have ceased to be effective. At the point when it is obvious that natural therapy is no longer working then Rimadyl, or other NSAID drugs will be used. A complete blood test to evaluate kidney and liver function is always recommended so that hopefully the use of the drugs will not make the dog more ill. If side effects are to occur they are more common when there is predisposing organ failure (dysfunction).

Dr. Doug prefers to start the treatment of arthritis with nutritional support. The diet is modified, and vitamin/mineral supplements are used. In addition, digestive enzymes for the gut and pineapple enzymes (bromelain) for the joints are used. These help break down the toxic inflammatory waste in the joints. Grape seed extract, a potent antioxidant is given twice a day along with glucosamine sulphate to help stop the destruction, and help repair the cartilage damage. Well prescribed homeopathic remedies chosen for the animals individual symptoms will help reduce the pain, and improve the quality of life. Acupuncture, massage, and physical therapy can also aid these painful pets. Only about 1 in 10 dogs will eventually need a prescription for the Rimadyl type drugs.