

Dog's name: _____ Weight: _____ lb Date: _____

If your dog takes any medication or has a medical diagnosis, print this and go over it with your vet before adding anything. Several items here interact with common medications, and the right plan depends on what else is going on.

You may also want a personalized [Holistic Canine Consult](#). I read your dog's full history and write a protocol built around their medications, conditions, age, and your budget, then walk you through it on a call. This page is the general version. A consult is your dog's version.

Work down this list. Do not skip to the bottom.

- Each step is ordered by how easy it is and how much difference it makes. The free ones at the top change more than the bottles at the bottom, which is not what anyone selling joint supplements wants you to know.
- ☐ **1. Put rugs or runners on slick floors.** Free, today. A dog who slips braces through the whole body, and that bracing lands in the joints.
 - ☐ **2. Use a ramp instead of stairs and jumps,** or carry them where you can. Free to inexpensive. Removes the loads that hurt most.
 - ☐ **3. Take two short walks instead of one long one.** Free. Movement circulates joint fluid. Stillness stiffens. Shorter and more often beats one big outing.
 - ☐ **4. Give them a supportive bed, off the hard floor and out of drafts.** Inexpensive, one time.
 - ☐ **5. Check where your dog actually sits on body condition, and adjust only if they need it.** Free, and if your dog is carrying extra, this is the most effective thing on this entire page. Every extra pound presses on the joint with every step. The easiest fix is counting treats into the daily food instead of adding them on top. No crash plan needed.
- But this only applies if your dog is genuinely overweight. Plenty of dogs are not, and some breeds struggle to hold weight at all. If yours is on the lean side, do not cut anything. Losing muscle is its own joint problem, because muscle is what supports and stabilizes the joint. Ask your vet for a body condition score so you are working from a real number instead of a guess in either direction.
- Steps 1 through 5 can all happen at once, today, and they cost nothing.** There is nothing to watch for and no reason to wait. Start them and keep going.
- From here down, add one at a time. A few days apart, not weeks.*

The steps above can all happen together. **The supplements and herbs below go in one at a time, spaced about three to five days apart.** Here is the part that gets this wrong everywhere else. You are spacing them out to catch a **bad** reaction, not to wait for a good one. A dog who does not tolerate something tells you quickly: loose stool, vomiting, itching, low energy, going off food. That shows up within a few days. If nothing like that appears, move on and add the next item.

Do not wait to see improvement before adding the next thing. The benefit from every item below takes somewhere between four weeks and a few months to become visible, and that is normal, not failure. If you waited for proof of each one before starting the next, you would spend most of a year assembling a plan. Dogs do not have that year to spare, and a stiff twelve-year-old has less of it than anyone.

So: add, watch three to five days for trouble, add the next. Judge whether the whole plan is working at eight to twelve weeks, not item by item.

One sensible exception: combination products. If you are already giving something like Dasuquin, you are not breaking this rule. A formulated joint product is one product, tested as a mixture, and it is a perfectly reasonable place to have started. Dasuquin is a product line rather than a single formula, and the versions differ in ways the packaging does not make obvious. All of them build on glucosamine and chondroitin with ASU (avocado and soybean unsaponifiables). Beyond that it varies: the one I give also contains MSM, boswellia and green tea, while another version currently on the shelf has no MSM at all. Read the panel on the bag you are actually holding rather than trusting the name. The ASU component is the part with evidence for slowing cartilage breakdown rather than only easing symptoms, and it is the real reason that product sits above basic glucosamine.

A caution on the senior formula. It lists omega-3, which reads like it covers the omega-3 item below. It does not. The version I checked carries 80 mg of total omega-3, of which 65 mg is EPA and DHA — roughly three percent of the arthritis target for a thirty-kilo dog. That is not a reason to avoid the product, but it is not your omega-3 source, and it is not worth paying a premium for on that basis.

So if you are on it: keep it, count it as covering items 9 and 10 below, and add the items it does not include, one at a time, starting with number 6.

- ☐ **6. Add UC-II collagen. 40 mg a day.** The strongest research in dogs of anything on this page, and among the least expensive. The dose is flat, so a chihuahua and a mastiff get the same 40 mg. It works by teaching the immune system to stop attacking cartilage, which is why more is not better. Conventionally given on an empty stomach or at bedtime, though a consistent dose with a little food beats a missed one. Expect gradual change over about eight weeks. Start the next item in a few days regardless.
- ☐ **7. Add omega-3 fish oil. Build up slowly.** Strong evidence, and the only nutritional approach AAFCO recognizes for arthritis. Read the label for EPA and DHA, not the capsule size. A "1000 mg fish oil" capsule usually holds only about 300 mg of the two that matter.

Dog's weight	Daily EPA + DHA target	Start here for 4-6 weeks
22 lb	up to ~1,700 mg	~425 mg
50 lb	up to ~3,200 mg	~800 mg
75 lb	up to ~4,400 mg	~1,100 mg
100 lb	up to ~5,400 mg	~1,350 mg

- Those are ceilings, not targets to rush to. Ease back if stool loosens. Choose a small-fish oil that is third-party tested.
- ☐ **8. Add collagen peptides. 5 to 10 grams a day.** Grams, not milligrams. This is a different supplement doing a different job than UC-II, not a substitute for it: it signals cartilage to rebuild rather than calming an immune attack. Goes in food or broth. A 2024 controlled trial in dogs showed real improvement over twelve weeks.
- ☐ **9. Add boswellia. 400 mg per 10 kg of body weight, split into two doses.** Look for a standardized extract at 60 to 65% boswellic acids. It calms an inflammation pathway that common pain medications leave untouched, and it works alongside UC-II rather than competing with it. Give it with food. Expect something at two to three weeks. Many practitioners suggest a break every eight to twelve weeks.
- ☐ **10. Glucosamine and chondroitin, if you want it.** This is last on purpose. The evidence in dogs is genuinely mixed, with some studies showing modest benefit and others no difference from placebo. It is safe and widely used, so if your dog is on it and doing well there is no reason to stop. But if you are starting from scratch and deciding where the first dollar goes, everything above it is better supported. Note that a combination product like Dasuquin brings more to the table than glucosamine alone, as described above.

Keep a simple record

Not to decide item by item, but so you can see the whole plan working. These changes are gradual enough that you will miss them without a record.

Week	Getting up	Stairs	Willing to walk	Touch	Tightness	Notes
Start						
4						
8						
12						

Rate each 1 to 5.

Better looks like: rising with less effort · less hesitation at the stairs · choosing to follow you into the kitchen instead of staying in the bed · **less sensitivity when you touch them** · **less tightness through the back and the joints.**

Those last two are worth learning to feel for, because your hands notice them before your eyes do. Run your hands slowly down either side of the spine and over the hips while your dog is resting. You are feeling for the flinch, the shift away, the held-tight muscle that will not soften. When those ease, something is working, and it usually eases before the stairs get easier.

Judge the plan at eight to twelve weeks. That is what the research timelines actually look like, and it is worth knowing up front so a slow week three does not convince you it failed.

Three things this page leaves out

Hyaluronic acid, MSM on its own, and SAM-e for joints get recommended often. I have not put doses here because the canine research I would want to stand behind is not there yet. That is not a verdict against them. It means they have not met the bar the rest of this page is held to.

Education, not medical advice for your individual dog. Talk with your veterinarian before adding supplements or herbs, especially if your dog takes medication or has a diagnosed condition.

Why each of these works is explained in the article, "When the Stairs Get Harder."

Continue to Cultivate Care