

Joint Support Plan for Your Dog

A starting point you can act on today, or take to your vet.

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

First: which page are you on?

Does your dog take ANY medication, or have a diagnosed condition (kidney, liver, heart, bleeding disorder, diabetes), or is surgery planned?

☐ **NO** → You can start everything in Step 1 today. Bring Step 2 to your next routine visit.

☐ **YES** → **This is a conversation sheet, not a start-today sheet.** Do Step 1 only, and take the rest to your vet first. Several items here interact with common medications. That is the whole reason this page has a vet column.

Step 1 · Start today. Free or nearly free. No vet needed.

Do this before you buy anything. These change how your dog moves more than most supplements do, and the last one outperforms everything in Step 2.

☐ **Put rugs, mats or runners on hard flooring.** A dog who slips because they are stiff and unsteady tenses every muscle, and that tension is felt throughout the whole body.

☐ **Use a ramp where stairs hurt or feel unsafe,** or support them by lifting or guiding. Ramps work for any short, raised distance.

☐ **Several shorter walks instead of one long one.** Movement keeps joint fluid circulating. Let them set the pace. Stillness stiffens.

☐ **Check the bed.** Supportive, off the hard floor, out of drafts.

☐ **Filter the drinking water.** A basic carbon pitcher is a start, but consider something more for you and your dog. I use reverse osmosis water for cooking and drinking.

☐ **Count treats into the daily food, not on top of it.** If your dog carries extra weight, this is the single most effective thing on this page. Every extra pound presses on the joint with every step. No crash plan needed. Ask your vet for a body condition score so you work from a real number.

Step 2 · The supplement menu, strongest first.

In order of effectiveness. They support one another, and together they build a more protective, whole-body effect. Add ONE at a time and give it several weeks anyway, to watch for any intolerance, like too much omega too fast, so you can adjust the dose before adding the next variable. Doses shown are the figures reported in the research, not a prescription for your dog.

#	Item	Dose reported	Timing	What it does · how strong the research is
1	UC-II collagen (undenatured)	40 mg/day, flat. Same for a chihuahua and a mastiff	Empty stomach or bedtime is conventional; a missed dose matters more than a little food	Teaches the immune system to stop attacking cartilage. Strongest dog evidence here (7 dog studies), and the least expensive
2	Omega-3 (EPA + DHA)	See the weight chart below. Start at 1/4 and build over 4–6 weeks	With food	Lowers inflammation body-wide. Strong; the only nutritional strategy AAFCO recognizes for arthritis
3	Collagen peptides (hydrolyzed)	5–10 grams/day. Grams, not milligrams	With food or broth	Signals cartilage to rebuild. A different job than UC-II, not a substitute. Good; 2024 dog trial
4	Boswellia (60–65% boswellic acids)	400 mg per 10 kg, split into 2 doses. Half that as maintenance after 2 weeks	With food	Calms an inflammation pathway pain meds leave untouched. Good, and works alongside UC-II
5	Green-lipped mussel (whole, freeze-dried)	Follow the product label for your dog's weight. Trials fed whole freeze-dried mussel at about 0.3% of the diet	With food	A whole food that brings omega-3s <i>and</i> cartilage building blocks together, including ETA, a fatty acid fish oil does not contain. Good — several dog trials. Give it ~6 weeks
6	Glucosamine + chondroitin	500–1,000 mg typical	With food	Supplies cartilage raw materials. Mixed, honestly — some studies show benefit, others none

★ **If you add #5, adjust #2.** Green-lipped mussel **is itself an omega-3 source**, so it counts toward the same ceiling in the chart below rather than stacking on top of fish oil. A full dose of both can quietly push your dog over, and that margin is thin. Pick one as the main source and treat the other as a top-up. **Skip it if your dog reacts to shellfish.**

A practical note: if you already keep omega-3s or collagen for yourself, those (#2 and #3) are the lowest-friction place to start, since they are likely already in the house.

★ **Buying #1 without getting fooled.** That “40 mg” is 40 mg of the standardized **UC-II®** ingredient, which is **less than 10 mg** of actual active collagen. Same dose, two numbers. On the label, insist on **both** the UC-II® trademark **and** the words “undenatured type II collagen.” Skip anything that only says “collagen,” “collagen peptides,” or “hydrolyzed.” That is a different, denatured product that does not do this job, no matter how big the milligram number. Clean dog-specific products that hit the real dose are genuinely hard to find, so a plain 40 mg UC-II® capsule made for people, given the same way, is often the practical choice.

Omega-3: what your dog’s size works out to

Dog’s weight	Daily EPA+DHA ceiling	Start here (1/4)
22 lb / 10 kg	~1,700 mg	~425 mg
50 lb / 22.7 kg	~3,200 mg	~800 mg
75 lb / 34 kg	~4,400 mg	~1,100 mg
100 lb / 45.5 kg	~5,400 mg	~1,350 mg

Read the label for EPA specifically, not the capsule size. EPA is the fraction doing the anti-inflammatory work, so it is the number to compare products on. A “1000 mg fish oil” capsule usually contains only ~300 mg EPA and DHA combined; if the label gives only total oil, divide by ~3.3. The ceilings above are EPA and DHA combined, **and green-lipped mussel counts toward them. These are ceilings, not targets to rush to.** The safe upper limit sits just above them, so the margin is thin. Store fish oil in the fridge, like you would milk.

Step 3 · Take these questions to your vet

Write the answers here so you have them.

1. Is my dog’s weight where you would want it? What is the body condition score?
2. My dog takes _____. Which items here interact with that? (Ask specifically about the omega-3 sources — fish oil and green-lipped mussel — if there is a bleeding risk or surgery ahead.)
3. If we go toward a full omega-3 dose, do you want bloodwork first, and how often after?
Usual pattern: a panel before starting, a recheck 2–4 weeks after reaching the dose, then every 3–6 months.
4. Is this arthritis, or something else that looks like it?
A cruciate tear, a disc problem, and referred pain all look the same from the kitchen doorway and need different things.
5. If my dog is on a daily anti-inflammatory, what is the plan for getting to the lowest effective dose, or to occasional use?
Daily is still a common prescription, and over time it asks a lot of the stomach lining, the kidneys and the liver. Omega-3 and boswellia can sometimes buy the room to come down. Ask what the expected outcome is, and what to watch for at your dog’s stage. Never change a prescribed dose on your own.

Stop and call your vet if you see: black or tarry stools · unusual bleeding or bruising · pale gums · sudden stomach upset · a sharp drop in appetite or energy. **Also:** stop high-dose omega-3 *and green-lipped mussel* one to two weeks before any surgery — they thin the blood the same way, and the effect adds up if your dog is also on an anti-inflammatory or a blood thinner.

Track it · 8 weeks

The changes are gradual. You will miss them without a record. Rate each 1–5.

Week	Getting up	Stairs	Willing to walk	Notes
Start				
2				
4				
6				
8				

Better looks like rising with less effort, less hesitation at the stairs, less sensitivity to touch, choosing to follow you into the kitchen instead of staying in the bed.

What my own dogs take

My own dogs take all three — UC-II, omega-3 and collagen — alongside a combination joint product that adds glucosamine and chondroitin, MSM, ASU, boswellia and green tea.

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.

The full explanation of why each of these works is in the article, “When the Stairs Get Harder.”

This page is a starting point built for dogs in general. If you would rather have one built for *your* dog, that is the **Holistic Canine Consult:** an intake, a written protocol you can hand your vet, and a call to walk through it. heartlandbotanicals.com/cultivated-care-co/holistic-canine-consult

Continue to Cultivate Care