CULTIVATED CARE · HEARTLAND BOTANICALS

# Joint Support Plan for Your Dog

*A starting point you can act on today, and 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.

## 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.

☐ **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.

☐ **Add something fresh to the bowl.** Highly processed kibble leaves the liver and kidneys more metabolic waste to clear, premium brands included. You do not have to change the entire diet to change the profile: a spoonful of plain canned pumpkin or cottage cheese, a sardine packed in water, broth to hydrate the kibble, a splash of kefir, an egg, or some gently steamed broccoli. Introduce new food over 3–5 days.

☐ **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. 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: **a week at minimum between supplements, and introduce new foods several times over a 3–5 day period.** That is long enough to catch an intolerance like too much omega too fast, and to walk back one change if you need to. Food trials run alongside, so a food you are still testing does not hold up the next supplement. If your vet wants a slower introduction for your dog, follow that.

Doses shown are the figures reported in the research, not a prescription for your dog. **I use human-grade supplements for my dogs whenever it is appropriate:** better oversight and labeling, real quality standards and third-party testing, and it is often the only way to reach a therapeutic level, which is a conversation to have with your vet. **Check the additives every time: never xylitol or artificial sweeteners.**

## Step 2 · The supplement menu, strongest first.

| # | Item | Dose | Timing | Action / research strength |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | **UC-II collagen** (undenatured) | **40 mg/day, flat.** Same for a chihuahua and a mastiff | Empty stomach or bedtime; 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 **half the maintenance figure** and step up over about 4 weeks | With food | Lowers inflammation body-wide. **Strong.** |
| 3 | **Boswellia** (60–65% boswellic acids at 30% AKBA) | **400 mg of standardized extract 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 |
| 4 | **Hydrolyzed collagen** | **240 mg per kg of body weight/day.** | With food or broth | Signals cartilage to rebuild. A different job than UC-II, not a substitute. **Good.** |
| 5 | **Turmeric/curcumin** | **15–20 mg per kg of body weight/day,** starting at a quarter of that. **Plain turmeric has no useful dose at any amount** | With a meal containing fat — and **only after your vet has checked gallbladder and liver function** | Blocks an inflammation pathway the others leave alone. **Human evidence strong, canine evidence thin. The form decides whether it works** — see the turmeric note below, and the article. |
| 6 | **Astaxanthin** | **0.3 mg per kg of body weight/day.** | With a meal | Antioxidant. **The dog studies measured antioxidant markers, not joints** — the joint evidence is human and mouse |
| 7 | **Green-lipped mussel** (freeze-dried, whole) | **About 30 mg per kg of body weight a day** | With or without food | Vet-scored and self-reported pain and mobility improved in a small dog trial. **Not definitive** |

**A practical note:** if you already keep omega-3s or collagen for yourself, those (#2 and #4) are the lowest-friction place to start.

★ **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." 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.

★ **Turmeric (#5). Less than 1% of plain curcumin reaches the bloodstream,** which is why the turmeric in most joint products has no useful dose at any amount. **Buy on the ingredient line, not the milligram count:** with piperine, phospholipid complex or Meriva, micronized or colloidal or Theracurmin, BCM-95, liposomal or cyclodextrin. **I choose to avoid the piperine versions** — concentrated piperine interferes with several common medications and can irritate stomach lining. **Have your vet check gallbladder and liver function before turmeric is added.** *The rest is in the article.*

**Omega-3** (all figures EPA and DHA combined)

| Dog's weight | Maintenance | Therapeutic range | Do not exceed (food and supplements combined) |
|---|---|---|---|
| 22 lb / 10 kg | ~500 mg | 1,000–1,700 mg | 2,100 mg |
| 50 lb / 22.7 kg | ~1,100 mg | 2,300–3,200 mg | 3,850 mg |
| 75 lb / 34 kg | ~1,700 mg | 3,400–4,400 mg | 5,200 mg |
| 100 lb / 45.5 kg | ~2,300 mg | 4,600–5,400 mg | 6,500 mg |

**Add the EPA + DHA lines on the label together,** not the "total omega-3" line; that sum is the figure the chart uses. **For joints, choose the product where EPA is the larger of the two.** A DHA-dominant oil is the pick for cognition, not joints. **The therapeutic range is the osteoarthritis target, not a number to rush to.** Store all omega-3s 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 fish oil 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 taking an NSAID, what is the plan for getting to the lowest effective dose, or to occasional use?
Over time it asks a lot of the stomach lining, the kidneys and the liver. Ask what the expected outcome is, and what to watch for at your dog's stage. Never change a prescribed dose on your own.

> *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.*

**The full explanation of why each of these works is in the article.**
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 care plan you can hand your vet, and two calls to walk through it.

Read the article | Explore the Consult

## *Continue to Cultivate Care*

**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 one to two weeks before any surgery — it thins the blood, and the effect adds up if your dog is also on an anti-inflammatory or a blood thinner.

*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.*