HIP DYSPLASIA: How can hydrotherapy help?

The hip is considered a ball and socket joint. Hip dysplasia is a lack of congruity between the socket side of the joint (acetabulum or pelvic portion) and the “ball” on the head of the femur (thigh bone). Because of the instability and abnormal motion of the joint surfaces, cartilage breaks down, arthritis occurs and the hip becomes painful. Hip dysplasia has many components to it including congenital issues, nutrition and environmental factors.

If your pet seems painful, has difficulty walking, is unwilling to jump into the car or onto the bed, difficulty climbing stairs or getting up from the floor you should have them evaluated initially at your primary care veterinarian. There are other problems that can have similar symptoms, so it is extremely important to have your veterinarian examine the dog.

The pain and discomfort of hip dysplasia can be treated in a variety of ways depending on the age of the pet and the severity of the symptoms. Common ways of treating include weight loss, medications, surgery and rehabilitation. Often with a program of hydrotherapy, the dog’s pain can be reduced and function increased, which often decreases the need for medication and surgery.

How does hydrotherapy help? Muscle strength is important to stabilize the joint. Exercising in water is a way to strengthen as well as provide exercise for weight management. Our hydrotherapy equipment includes a therapy pool with jets and an underwater treadmill that have heated water for treatments.

Swimming provides a non-weight bearing environment. Without the body weight on the joints, there is less pain during exercise. The gentle motion in the hips lubricates the joints and the motion builds muscle.

The initial rehabilitation session consists of an examination from a rehabilitation perspective, discussion about home exercises, weight loss and owner goal’s for treatment. A referral from your primary care veterinarian is required for an evaluation. We have a referral form that we can fax to them prior to your first visit.

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