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# SITS & WIGGLES

The Newsletter of the Animal Clinic of Chardon

WHAT'S INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

*The Impact of Chronic Pain on your Cat's Quality of Life*

*How to Tell if Your Cat is in Pain*



## THE IMPACT OF CHRONIC PAIN ON YOUR CAT'S QUALITY OF LIFE

Although pain is, well... painful, it can also be useful. Acute pain — the useful kind — is typically related to illness, injury, or surgery, and can last for a few seconds or a few months. Acute pain is the brain's way of telling us something is wrong, and we need to protect the affected area so it can heal. Let's say your cat injures their paw — they'll avoid putting weight on the area until it feels better.

Chronic pain, however, is not useful. Chronic pain, like from osteoarthritis (OA), happens when the pain signal doesn't go away. It keeps bombarding the nervous system until the nervous system actually changes, making your cat more sensitive to pain signals and negatively impacting your cat's quality of life. (Continued on next page)



## CHRONIC PAIN (CONTINUED)

In fact, for chronic conditions like OA, the pain signal never goes away and can take a tremendous toll on a cat's energy, comfort, and emotional well-being. And just like humans, cats with chronic pain have more trouble functioning and interacting with the rest of the world and can experience less joy in their lives because they're hurting.

While you can seek out medical advice or take pain medications to help with your acute or chronic pain, your cat can't report the pain they're in or take themselves to see their veterinarian — they need your help to recognize the signs of chronic pain.

### Chronic Cat Pain from Osteoarthritis

A surprising number of cats suffer from chronic pain due to osteoarthritis. One study found that 61% of cats over the age of six suffer from OA, while another study found that 90% of cats over the age of 12 suffer from the condition.

Cats hide almost everything, especially pain. Your veterinarian relies on you to report changes in your cat's behavior for more accurate diagnoses. Without knowing what to look for and the initiation of a proper pain management protocol (as directed by a veterinarian), a cat in pain can suffer in silence and struggle to get around, play, eat, groom themselves, use their litter box, or even sleep.

If left untreated, OA will only worsen over time. This can create a ripple effect, leading to even more problems for your cat:

- Cats with OA are less inclined to move, meaning they're less likely to play, jump up or down, or hunt. This can lead to weight gain and muscle loss, making it even more difficult for them to get around.
- OA pain often causes cats to groom themselves less, meaning that they're more likely to get painful mats and have a less healthy coat and skin.
- Chronic pain from OA can lead to a general increase in your cat's sensitivity to pain. This can sometimes be seen if you pet your cat and their skin ripples, or if they don't like being touched when they used to enjoy it.
- A cat in pain is less likely to interact with you, gets grumpy upon contact from you or another animal, and might prefer to spend time alone, damaging the bond you share with them.

Osteoarthritis pain can be a serious problem for your cat's quality of life and health. Without treatment, the pain will continue to get worse. Helping your cat begins by talking with your vet and coming up with a medical treatment plan to relieve your cat's pain.

If you're wondering if your cat may have OA-related pain, use this [simple checklist](#). If the results indicate that they could have osteoarthritis, the next step is to make an appointment with your veterinarian for a comprehensive exam and to discuss treatment options. A safe and effective pain management protocol can go a long way toward easing your cat's discomfort, preventing further damage — and helping them live their best life.

Written by Dr. Joyce A. Login

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# HOW TO TELL IF YOUR CAT IS IN PAIN

Cats often disguise the fact they are in pain. That may be because in the wild, cats that appear sick or injured are vulnerable to predators.

Cat pain can be caused by such things as arthritis, dental problems, urinary tract infections, bone disease and cancer. Pain is also common following a surgical procedure.

You are in the best position to look for the subtle changes in behavior that may indicate your cat is suffering. It's important to stay alert, because the sooner your cat's pain is diagnosed and treated, the sooner he or she can heal and resume a normal, happy life.

If your cat exhibits one or more of these behaviors and you suspect it may be due to pain, notify us immediately.



## VOCALIZING:

- Meowing
- Purring
- Hissing
- Growling

## DAILY HABITS:

- Withdraws from social interaction
- Decreased appetite
- Changes in sleeping or drinking
- Fails to use the litter box
- Urinates frequently
- Won't groom or grooms less, looks unkempt
- Sleeps more

## SELF-MUTILATION:

- Licking
- Biting
- Scratching a particular part of its body

## ACTIVITY LEVEL:

- Restless
- Reluctant to move
- Has difficulty getting up from a laying position
- Repetitively gets up and lies down
- Trembles or shakes
- Limp
- Can't leap as high
- Seeks more affection
- Avoids being petted or handled
- Hides

## POSTURE:

- Generally lays with feet underneath
- Arches back or tucks in abdomen

## FACIAL EXPRESSION:

- Grimaces, furrowed brow, vacant stare
- Glazed, wide-eyed or looks sleepy
- Enlarged pupils
- Flattened ears
- Pants when at rest

## SELF-PROTECTION:

- Protects a part of its body
- Doesn't put weight on a limb
- Doesn't want to be held or picked up

## AGGRESSIVE:

*especially a previously friendly cat*

- Acts out of character
- Growls, hisses, bites
- Pins ears back

***What's it called when ACOC runs out of treats?***

***A cat-astrophe.***

**ACOC Birthdays**

**None!**

