Hip Dysplasia

A COMMON ORTHOPEDIC PROBLEM

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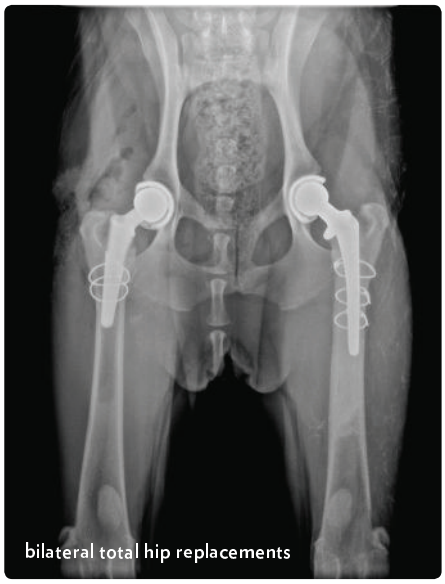
Hip dysplasia is one of the most common orthopedic problems faced by our pets. But if your animal is diagnosed with hip dysplasia, what exactly does that mean? Hip dysplasia is defined as an "abnormal development of the hip joint". Pets with dysplasia have a "loose" hip and instability, which causes damage to the hip joint and leads to progressive, painful arthritis.

What are some of the symptoms of hip dysplasia? One of the signs is a "bunny-hopping" gait. The hind legs of normal dogs usually move opposite of one another when running – the left leg moves forward the right leg moves backwards. The hind legs of dogs with hip dysplasia typically move in unison, coming forward and moving back together, similar to the way a rabbit runs. Other clinical symptoms include reluctance to jump, difficulty rising, muscle wasting of the hip area, hips that sway excessively when walking or trotting and pain when the hips are extended behind the dog.

Dogs of any age and breed can get hip dysplasia. While we most commonly see hip dysplasia diagnosed in larger breed dogs, smaller breeds can also be affected by hip dysplasia. Both young dogs (even puppies) and adult dogs can be diagnosed with hip dysplasia. The condition typically begins when the patient is young, but in some cases does not become a clinical problem until adulthood, when the pain that is associated with the arthritis and cartilage damage caused by hip dysplasia becomes apparent.

Steps can be taken to save the hip if the condition is caught early – before arthritis develops. A simple and quick procedure called juvenile pelvic symphysiodesis (JPS) may be indicated if hip dysplasia is diagnosed between 3-4 months of age.


bilateral total hip replacements

This minimally invasive surgical procedure is associated with almost no pain and modifies the growth pattern of the hip, leading to a deeper, tighter hip joint. If hip dysplasia is diagnosed between 5-10 months of age, the puppy may be eligible for a double or triple pelvic osteotomy (DPO/TPO). These surgical procedures shift the position of the socket, making it deeper and increasing the coverage of the hip. JPS, TPO and DPO procedures are designed to save the normal hip and prevent arthritis.

In cases with older animals, where arthritis is already advanced and the hip joint has begun to deteriorate, many patients will require a total hip replacement (THR). THR's use a specially-made artificial ball and socket joint to recreate the hip without the pain and lameness associated with hip dysplasia. A THR is the best option for most patients facing severe hip problems. Unlike many other treatments, a THR has a high probability to return your companion to normal function, with an excellent long-term prognosis for the rest of their life. For other patients with advanced hip dysplasia, a femoral head ostectomy, or FHO, is also an option. With an FHO, the ball portion of the hip joint is removed, and a "false joint" of muscles and ligaments is created. This procedure is generally only recommended for smaller animals, and wherever possible, a total hip replacement is preferred for the best result for the patient.

At Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists, our board-certified veterinary surgeons have training in all the different surgical treatments for hip dysplasia. So if your pet is diagnosed with hip dysplasia there is hope! Talk to your family veterinarian to learn more about hip dysplasia, and if a referral to GCVS is right for you and your pet.