

PUPPY Hips

LOOSE HIPS ARE PAINFUL HIPS

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Hip dysplasia is a common problem in puppies and young dogs. Hip dysplasia is defined as abnormal development of the hip joint. Hip dysplasia can affect any breed including mix breed dogs, but the condition is particularly common in Retrievers, German shepherds, Rottweilers and Setters. Hip dysplasia typically begins around 3 months of age.

Hip dysplasia leads to a loose hip. The hip is composed of a ball and socket joint. A shallow socket allows the head to partially slide out of the socket, causing damage to the edge of the socket and surface of the ball. The cartilage surfaces of the joint become damaged, leading to progressive, painful arthritis. The arthritis progresses gradually over the lifetime of the dog, and can begin in early puppyhood. Secondary muscle loss occurs due to reluctance to use the limb properly because of the associated pain.

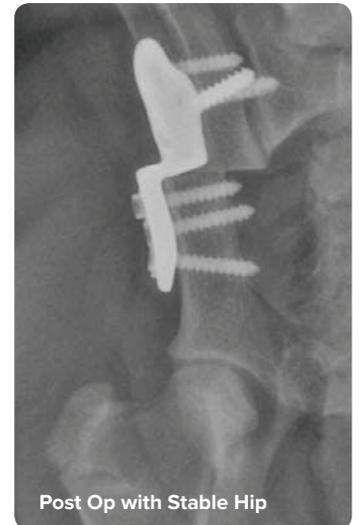
How can you tell if your puppy has loose hips? Clinical signs of hips dysplasia include a “bunny-hopping” gait. The hind legs of dogs having hip dysplasia typically move in unison, coming forward and moving back together, similar to the way a bunny runs. Other clinical symptoms include reluctance to 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.

Your veterinarian can quickly make a diagnosis of hip dysplasia. It is a good idea

to have all medium and large breed puppies screened by your veterinarian at 3-4 months of age. The condition of the hip is initially assessed with an

orthopedic examination. **For a very early assessment, a genetic test can be used in Labrador retrievers to determine the risk to develop hip dysplasia as early as a few days after birth (Hip dysplasia Dysgen IDE genetic test).** This is a simple, affordable blood test that can be conveniently performed at the time of vaccinations. Early radiographic evaluation using the PennHip technique may be recommended. The earlier hip dysplasia is diagnosed, the more simple and less costly the solution. If a loose hip is diagnosed your puppy may be referred to an orthopedic specialist, such as Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists, for a second opinion and treatment. The earlier the condition is discovered, the more options exist for its treatment.

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. 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. If hip dysplasia is diagnosed between 5-12 months of age, the puppy may be eligible for a double pelvic osteotomy (DPO). This procedure is best performed between 5-8 months of age. This surgical procedure shifts the position of the socket, making it deeper and increasing the tightness of the hip. Both JPS and DPO are designed to save the normal hip, prevent arthritis and avoid the necessity of a total hip replacement (THR) or femoral head ostectomy (FHO) in the future.

If you suspect your puppy or dog has hip dysplasia, see your veterinarian as soon as possible. The key to success and saving your puppy's hips is early diagnosis and appropriate treatment!