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## Introduction to Canine Hip Dysplasia

By Sally Doyle

What is Hip Dysplasia?

The hip joint consists of a "ball" on the femoral bone, and a "socket" on the hip bone. Canine hip dysplasia simply defined is when a dog's hips do not develop normally and the ball does not fit snugly into the socket.

What Causes Hip Dysplasia?

While there is no "conclusive proof" of the cause of hip dysplasia, there are 2 general schools of thought about its cause - 1) genetic or 2) environmental

These two differing viewpoints often place the dog breeders at odds with the dog owners, causing each to blame the other for the problem.

Genetic: The puppy is born with the problem

Environmental: The puppy is too heavy resulting in excessive growth and/or over or under exercising a puppy during its growth phase resulting in developmental problems.

The most common theory is that hip dysplasia is indeed genetic. Most breeders have their breeding dogs' hips rated by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) or Pennsylvania Hip Improvement Program (Penn-HIP), or various other international orthopedic groups.

We could discuss the merits of both theories, but it doesn't change the facts. If your dog has hip dysplasia, you need to deal with it. You may be deciding what to do next, or you may have already decided, and want to know what to expect.

When Does a Dog Get Hip Dysplasia?

If you subscribe to the theory that it is genetic, they are born with it. Dogs that have severe hip dysplasia often begin to have problems as puppies. Sometimes, the hip dysplasia does not cause pain for the dog, so they do not show signs of it until they develop arthritis in their hip joints. Some dogs that are not as severe can live out their entire lives with few, if any symptoms.

What are the Symptoms of Hip Dysplasia?

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There are a number of symptoms of hip dysplasia. Some dog owners only say that their dog didn't walk right. Others will say they saw no symptoms at all, or just that their dog began to limp. Following is a list of common symptoms, of which your dog may have a couple and not have hip dysplasia.

**Bunny Hopping:** The dog tends to use both hind legs together, rather than one at a time. This occurs when the dog is running, or going up stairs.

**Side Sit:** Also called lazy sit, slouch or frog sit. When the dog sits, its legs are not positioned bent and close to the body. They can be loose and off to one side, or one or both legs may be straight out in front.

**Sway Walk:** Also called a loose walk. When the dog is walking, the back end sways back and forth because the hips are loose.

**Unusual Laying Position:** Legs are straight out and off to the side when the dog is laying on its stomach or legs are straight out behind the dog. (All dogs lay with their legs behind them on occasion, many dogs with hip dysplasia lay like this all the time.)

**Limping:** The dog may favor one hind leg or the other, and may alternate legs that it is favoring.

**Quiet Puppy:** Puppies who are already in pain from hip dysplasia tend to be very good puppies. They do not rough house the way that normal puppies do. They also tend to sleep for a long time after playing or going for a walk. Some owners describe their puppy with hip dysplasia as the best puppy they've ever had.

**Dog Doesn't Jump:** Not only do they not jump on you, they seem to pull themselves up by their front end onto furniture as opposed to jumping up.

**Underdeveloped Hind Quarters and Overdeveloped Chest:** This is caused by the failure to use the hind legs normally and jump. The dog also may actually be shifting weight forward.

### Diagnosing Hip Dysplasia

The only way to diagnose hip dysplasia is with x-rays. However, I must note here that you should treat the dog and not the x-rays. Some dogs with seemingly mild hip dysplasia are in a lot of pain, while other dogs with apparent severe hip dysplasia do not display symptoms.

### What Can Be Done for My Dog?

If you have had x-rays taken of your dog's hips at your regular vet, you may have been referred to an orthopedic surgeon. The surgeon is going to recommend various surgical options for your dog. I am going to give you a very brief overview of these surgeries. You will need to discuss your dog's options with the surgeon. They will provide the details of each surgical option. Some people are able to treat their dog with nutritional supplements and avoid surgery. Ultimately, it will be your decision to determine the best treatment for your dog.

### Surgical Options:

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Juvenile Pubic Symphysiodesis (JPS) – This surgery is performed on puppies under 20 weeks of age, generally when the puppy is neutered or spayed. It shows great promise as a preventive measure, by altering the pelvic growth. This surgery has a short recovery period, but is generally done before a puppy can be diagnosed. However, once you've lived with hip dysplasia, it may prove to be worthwhile for a puppy considered at risk for developing hip dysplasia.

Dorsal Acetabular Rim (DAR) - This surgery consists of bone grafts being taken from other areas of the pelvis to build up the rim on the hip socket (cup). The idea is for the femoral head to have a deeper socket to fit into. It's relatively new, so there is some question as to how a dog will do into old age – there aren't many older dogs that have had it done.

Triple Pelvic Osteotomy (TPO) – This surgery involves cutting the bone around the hip socket and repositioning the socket for a better fit with the femoral head. The bones are plated back together so they heal in the correct alignment. This surgery is performed on young dogs before they have finished growing.

Total Hip Replacement (THR) - This surgery consists of replacing the hip joint similar to a human hip replacement. A new cup is usually attached to the hip bone, and the femoral head is cut off the leg

bone and an implant is inserted into the leg bone. This surgery is done on more mature dogs that have finished growing. Due to the size of the implants, this surgery is done on larger dogs. Previously, all artificial hip components were cemented in place. More recently, cementless hip replacements are being performed.

Femoral Head & Neck Osteotomy (FHO) - This surgery consists of removing the femoral head of the leg bone to eliminate the pain of hip dysplasia. The dog's body will then develop scar tissue to create an artificial hip joint. Long considered only appropriate for smaller dogs or as a salvage operation for a failed THR, it has become increasingly popular for larger dogs.

### Non–Surgical or Conservative Management Option

Many people choose to have surgery performed on their dog only as a last resort. Some are able to manage their dog's hip dysplasia with supplements, acupuncture, chiropractic care, exercise and weight management. Sometimes, the puppy will show signs of pain from hip dysplasia, and once it is done growing and the muscles are fully developed, they seem to "go into remission", developing signs of hip problems again as the dog ages. Surgical options are still available to you if the conservative path is unsuccessful.

For additional information on hip dysplasia, please visit

<http://www.mypoordog.com>

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Mypoordog.com - Dog owners helping other dog owners by sharing their stories of treatment, surgery, including total hip replacement (THR), femoral head ostectomy (FHO) and triple pelvic osteotomy (TPO) and recovery from Canine Hip Dysplasia in high quality e-books.

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### **Your Questions On Canine Hip Dysplasia – Answered.**

**By Jack Russell**

What is canine hip dysplasia?

Canine hip dysplasia (CHD) is one of the most frustrating diseases in veterinary medicine today simply because it is so difficult to prevent and treat. CHD is a developmental disease of the bones in which the head of the thigh bone poorly fits the hip socket, causing damage to the cartilage, gradual destruction of the joint, pain and swelling. This disease should not be confused with hip arthritis. Rather, it is the most common cause of arthritis in the hips.

How is canine hip dysplasia transmitted?

CHD is a heritable disease. It is passed on by the parents to the offspring. The only effective measure therefore to eradicate the disease is to prevent dogs with hip dysplasia from breeding. However, this is easier said than done, because not all dogs with hip dysplasia show signs of the disease. Seemingly normal dogs still carry the gene for CHD and are bred, causing the disease to stay within the gene pool.

How does one know if a dog has hip dysplasia?

A dog with hip dysplasia generally has less energy and movement. It has difficulty rising from a sitting position, lameness in the back legs, is hopping like a rabbit when running, and is reluctant to go up the stairs. However, these symptoms are usually not evident till the dog reaches middle age. In extreme cases though, some dogs exhibit obvious hip problems as early as 5–6 months of age.

How does a vet confirm if a dog has hip dysplasia?

Sad to say, there is no blood test or genetic test yet that will detect if a dog is a carrier of CHD or not. Diagnosis of the disease is routinely done through physical examinations and x-rays. X-rays help in assessing how bad the condition is, and through comparison with future x-rays, it can also serve as a gauge of how well the chosen treatment is working. Two techniques for taking x-rays of CHD-afflicted dogs are listed below:

1. hip-extended ventrodorsal view x-ray - It provides a frontal view of the pelvis and hip-joints and best assesses the degree of severity of arthritis present.

2. PennHIP radiography technique - It is used to detect hip looseness in dogs as young as four months of age.

What are the treatment options for canine hip dysplasia?

There is no real cure for CHD just yet, but there are conservative or non-surgical ways to relieve its symptoms. These include the use of drugs to relieve pain and inflammation. Rimadyl, Ectogesic and Deramaxx are effective and have given a lot of suffering dogs the relief needed to live a normal life. Weight loss programs, controlled exercise and physical therapy are also very effective in certain cases.

When conservative treatment is not enough, the only other option is surgery. Surgery can be very effective as it corrects the underlying cause of hip pain which is a malformed joint. Surgery is approached in two different ways when dealing with hip dysplasia. Prophylactic surgery is done to prevent the progression of arthritis while therapeutic surgery aims to treat already arthritic hips.

Triple pelvic osteotomy is the primary preventive procedure available. It involves cutting the pelvis in three places and rotating the hip sockets to provide better coverage. This procedure is effective as long as it is done before arthritis sets in or before the joint is damaged. Another kind of preventive surgery, although still being studied if it is effective or not, is pubic symphysiodesis. This involves manipulating the way the pelvis grows to ensure a tighter hip. This procedure is done on very young dogs.

Therapeutic procedures include total hip replacement and femoral head ostectomy. Total hip replacement is performed mainly on larger dogs. High density, medical plastic is used to replace the socket and a high-quality, non-corrosive alloy is used for the ball. This procedure has a high success rate, almost completely eliminates pain and enables the dog to completely resume activity.

Another therapeutic procedure for hip dysplasia is femoral head ostectomy. It involves the removal of the top of the femur which then eliminates the painful grinding at the hip joint. The femur is then allowed to float freely causing the formation of scar tissue which then serves as a false joint. This procedure is not recommended for mild cases of arthritis and is generally effective only on smaller, well-muscled dogs.

Can canine hip dysplasia be prevented?

The best measure of prevention is of course careful breeding since hip dysplasia is a heritable condition. The onset of hip dysplasia can be delayed in many dogs with a genetic predisposition by preventing excessive weight gain during the early months and by making sure that the puppy does not place undue stress on the hips.

OFA and PennHip offers information on breed risk. Prospective puppy buyers are advised to check for pedigrees for OFA, PennHip or GDC certifications.

Jack Russell is a long time dog fancier, visit his Dog Resources Blog and download his Free Dog Owners Handbook – it's Dog Gone Good!

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