

# ORAH Info:

## NSAID Trials for Older Dogs Who May Have Chronic Pain



Chronically painful dogs are good at hiding their pain. Sometimes we see obvious signs, such as limping, crying out, or trouble getting around. Sometimes the signs start more gradually, are subtle, and can be easily missed. We'll say to ourselves, "Oh, he's older, he's just slowing down."

Many more dogs are suffering from chronic pain than their owners realize. Often we don't know just how uncomfortable they have been until we see how much better they feel when their pain is relieved. For comparison's sake, we often recommend a two- to four-week trial period on pain medication for older dogs.

NSAIDs (non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs) are often used to treat chronic pain. They have been amazingly helpful for millions of dogs. This class of drugs includes Rimadyl, Deramaxx, Metacam, aspirin, and several others. Reducing pain and inflammation allows dogs to be more active, with a better quality of life. They are less likely to gain weight and more likely to retain muscle mass, so they function (and feel) better, for longer, than dogs who are sedentary.

Side effects of NSAIDs are rare, but can include stomach upset (resulting in appetite decrease, vomiting, or diarrhea) or, in extremely rare cases, stomach ulcers or liver or kidney side effects. Ideally, especially if your dog is a senior dog (8 or older), we will get baseline bloodwork before starting the medication, although this is not required. Once your dog has been on the medication for 2-3 weeks, it is a good idea to check the liver and kidney values with a blood sample, especially if the meds have been helpful and you are planning to continue them. Giving the meds with food can help reduce stomach upset.

Please note that it is extremely important not to give human pain medication to your pet without checking with us first. These medications are untested in pets (or worse, may be known toxins) and could have very serious side effects. Cats, more so than dogs, may experience serious toxic effects.

Deramaxx and Metacam are given once a day; Rimadyl can be given as a single daily dose, or can be split into two doses, depending on what works better. Please call us right away if you have any questions about dosing or side effects.

After about 2-4 weeks, it is time to assess the usefulness of the trial. We hope you'll be noticing your dog moving around better, with more enthusiasm for daily activities, and more happiness overall. Please give us a call after 1-2 weeks on the medication so we can troubleshoot any issues and talk over how things have been going. We feel strongly that pain relief is one of the most important things we can do for older dogs, and are committed to helping you find an affordable way to keep your pet feeling good as she or he ages. Rimadyl, for example, is available in a generic version, which can cost significantly less yet work as well for some dogs as the name-brand product.

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