



Monitoring Your Aging Dog for Signs of Disease

As your dog ages, the likelihood he will develop various changes in the function of his body systems increases. Some of these will be normal changes due to the aging process, others may be indicative of disease. To be more easily alerted to possible signs of disease early in the disease process:

Monitor food consumption: how much is being eaten?, What type of food is being eaten (e.g.; does your dog leave the hard kibble and only eat the canned?) Any difficulty eating or swallowing? Any vomiting?

Monitor water consumption: drinking more or less than usual?

Monitor urination and defecation: color, amount, consistency and frequency of stool; color and amount of urine; any signs of pain while urinating or defecating? Any urinating or defecating in the house?

Measure weight every 2 months: for small dogs use an infant or mail scale, or use the scale in your veterinarian's office; for medium-size dogs, weigh yourself holding the dog, then weigh yourself and subtract to find the difference; for larger dogs, you may need to use your veterinarian's scale.

Groom, check and clip nails, look for any lumps, bumps, or non-healing sores; any abnormal odors? Any change in size of abdomen? Increased hair loss?

Monitor behavior: sleep patterns, obeying commands, tendency to be around people; any house soiling? Easily startled? Anxious when left alone?

Monitor activity and mobility: difficulty with stairs? Inability to exercise without tiring quickly? Bumping into things? Sudden collapses? Seizures? Any loss of balance? Any lameness or change in gait?

Look for any changes in respiration: coughing, panting, sneezing?

Provide home dental care: brush your dog's teeth, regularly examine the inside of his mouth; any excessive drooling? Bad breath? Are the gums yellow, light pink, or purplish?

Monitor environmental temperature and the temperature at which your dog seems most comfortable.

Schedule regular appointments with your veterinarian.

