

SUPPLEMENTS FOR YOUR DOG

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OMEGAS
OMG!
MICROBIOME

“Oh” is for omega-3 fatty acids. “My” is for microbiome (think probiotics). “Gosh” is for glucosamine.

Let's first consider O, or omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA), and their role in balancing omega-6, another essential fatty acid. Both omega-3s and -6s are long carbon chain building blocks of fats that become part of cell membranes. When your dog's body is full of omega-6s, the inflammatory response is strong, or what we call *pro-inflammatory*. This pro-inflammatory response can be seen in a dog who has hot and itchy skin or bloody stress diarrhea, or suffers from painful arthritic joint disease. Adding omega-3 supplements to your dog's diet may help decrease some of these pro-inflammatory responses.

We use omega-3s in our canine patients with chronic diseases such as atopy (a genetic tendency toward allergies), inflammatory bowel disease and osteoarthritis. The dose is based on the condition being treated. For example, dogs with osteoarthritis need a higher level per kilogram of body weight. Because it's possible to give too much EPA and DHA, it's important to consult with your veterinarian about dosing as well as specific products.

On to M for microbiome, or the case for using probiotics with our canine companions. Current research on this



promising topic is showing that people and dogs have very similar gut microbiomes, or communities of microorganisms. If you suffer from inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), you know that these communities shift predictably.

Dogs with IBD also experience this, and they have become translational research models for IBD in humans, a development that promises to benefit both species.

In a study in which dogs with IBD

were given either VSL#3 (a human probiotic) or a conventional therapy of metronidazole and prednisolone, VSL#3 showed positive results. We are now using this human probiotic in dogs with IBD and other chronic enteropathies (diseases of the intestine). This product has a lot of research behind it, and is considered the “gold standard” against which veterinary probiotics are compared and selected. Among VSL#3’s attributes is that it has a lot of beneficial bacteria—430 billion per unflavored packet—including specific types of bacteria with known beneficial effects.

These beneficial bacteria help inhibit pathogens and improve the gut lining, but we believe that their biggest plus is their ability to improve the gut immune system. The gut contains about 70 percent of the body’s immune cells, and beneficial bacteria in probiotics seem to regulate and modulate the function of these cells. Many of the diseases we treat today in dogs are associated with

immune dysregulation or inappropriate immune function. For example, dogs with skin allergies or canine atopic disease may benefit from probiotics. Chronic recurrent or resistant urinary tract infection is another disease that may improve with the use of probiotics. Discuss your dog’s medical condition and the use of probiotics with your veterinarian.

Now to G. For osteoarthritis, we recommend oral glucosamine and chondroitin supplements along with omega-3s. We prefer chondroitin sourced from the green-lipped mussel, or *Perna canaliculus*, which research has shown to provide an overall positive response. Glucosamine and chondroitin are building blocks of normal joint fluid and cartilage, which break down with the chronic inflammation of degenerative joint diseases such as hip and elbow dysplasia, cranial cruciate disease, and osteochondritis dissecans. Oral intake of glucosamine and

chondroitin may promote rebuilding of more normal joint structures and slow the progression of degenerative osteoarthritis.

Research also supports the use of OMG supplements as preventives. Among the findings:

Dogs whose diets were high in omega-3s had less pain, inflammation and radiographic evidence of osteoarthritis following cranial cruciate rupture. Intervention with a glucosamine-type supplement improved early elbow dysplasia. Finally, feeding puppies probiotics may reduce inflammation and signs of atopy later in their lives.

We promote the safe use of supplements with our dogs to prevent or ameliorate long-term chronic disease states. The types of drugs that are required to treat the pain of osteoarthritis and atopy’s constant itching and bacterial infection, we feel, justify considering early intervention with OMG supplements. 🐾

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