

# Ask A Vet: Dietary Supplements May Give Your Pet A Boost

*Sunday, March 1, 2015*

Dear Dr. Weldy's,

Is it worth the extra cost and trouble to give my dog supplements like fatty acids and glucosamine?

Dear Reader,

My short answer to your question is yes - it is absolutely worth it, especially if your dog has a specific issue like arthritis or a skin problem. Essential fatty acids are just like their name indicates essential to a healthy diet for your pet. These unsaturated fats are made up of both omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids. Unlike many things, our bodies cannot make them, so they must come straight from the diet. Glucosamine and chondroitin supplements are less proven and more controversial as far as efficacy, but I have seen many dogs, cats, and even horses with arthritis benefit from its use.

Omega 6 fatty acids make up the main structural part of our cells, so having plenty of these for your pets body to work with is very important. The health of your pets skin probably benefits the most from omega 6s. It has been proven that dogs with greasy or dandruff ridden skin are often low in essential fatty acids despite eating a diet considered adequate. It has also been shown that this condition usually improves by supplementing extra fatty acids beyond what is typically in dog foods. Although skin problems in pets are often complicated by other factors such as infection and allergies, they will usually benefit from additional supplementation. Good sources of omega 6 fatty acids for your dog would be primrose oil, safflower oil, and vegetable/corn oil.

Omega 3 fatty acids are not only important because they help make up parts of the eye and central nervous system, but they also have an anti-inflammatory effect. This anti-inflammatory effect is widespread and benefits common medical issues such as arthritis and the itching associated with allergies. It has been shown to be even more reliable than glucosamine when treating arthritis in dogs. The best sources of omega 3 fatty acids for pets are cold water fish oils.

Glucosamine and Chondroitin are part of normal cartilage, are well absorbed by the body in an oral form, and have very few side effects. It is theorized that supplementing with these may strengthen the bodys ability to build new cartilage and in some cases act as an anti-inflammatory. Although some studies have shown no benefit in both people and animals, there seems to be a lot of anecdotal or testimonial evidence that it does make arthritic joints more comfortable.

Supplementing your pets diet with a proper ratio of fatty acids and Glucosamine/Chondroitin is a great way to help prevent and treat many diseases. This can be done through high quality dog foods, supplements, or even fortified treats. Consult your veterinarian on what the best route is for you and your pet.

-Dr. Justin Sellon