

Signs of Pain in Dogs and Cats

Behavioral factor	Indicators of pain
Change in normal behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loss of normal behavior • Development of new behavioral patterns (hiding, avoidance of contact)
Activity level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diminished exercise tolerance and general activity • Reduced social interaction • Unwillingness to initiate play
House training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Less frequent defecation • House soiling • Difficulty accessing litter box (cats)
Grooming	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased self-grooming • Matted fur • Over-grooming or licking of painful area
Posture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty standing • Hunched posture • Lowered head • Sitting or lying abnormally • Body language or facial expression indicating discomfort
Response to handling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoidance of manipulation or handling during exam • Aversion to petting or grooming • Vocalization when painful area is touched
Pain-response actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scooting, licking, or chewing of painful area • Aggression or irritability when approached or touched • Difficulty finding comfortable position • Circling before lying down
Mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limping (dogs) • Bilateral stiffness (cats) • Gait abnormalities • Difficulty standing, walking, taking stairs, getting up • Diminished running and jumping • Reluctance to walk on slippery surfaces
Vocalization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whimpering, yelping, or hissing (cats) when painful area is touched or manipulated • Decreased greeting behavior
Sleeping habits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disruption in sleep patterns • Constant shifting to change limb and joint angles
Hip dysplasia, hind limb, or lower back abnormalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abnormal placement of weight on front legs • Placement of front legs under the chest instead of the shoulders • Abnormal wear on front nails
Acute postsurgical pain (facial expressions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drawn-back ears • Furrowed brow • Drawn-back lips • Squinted eyes