

## Hip Dysplasia

By definition, hip dysplasia is the abnormal development of the ball and socket type hip joint. Factors affecting the health and conformation of this joint can be divided into 3 categories: Genetics, Environment and Nutrition.

Unfortunately, genetics do seem to play a major role in the development of this condition, judging by the prevalence in the traditionally affected breeds. E.g. German shepherd, Labrador, Golden Retriever, Great Dane and Saint Bernard. Sadly, the condition is associated with more than one gene – this means that eliminating it from breeding lines presents breeding organisations with a challenge. Thus the probability of ending up with a dog with this condition is great if pups are bought from non-registered, unreliable or backyard breeders.

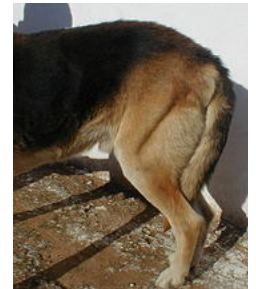


In recent years, the nutrition of affected breeds from weaning age has also come under the spotlight. Trials have shown that keeping these puppies on the skinny side improves the state of the hips as less pressure is exerted on the pliable cartilage surfaces of the hip. Growth rates that are too rapid have also been implicated as a contributing factor.



### What are the signs of Hip Dysplasia?

- Limping on a leg.
- Difficulty getting up stairs or climbing into a car.
- Bunny hopping.
- Reluctance to go for long walks.
- Narrow based stance in the hind legs.



Normal Hip



Mild dysplasia



Severe dysplasia

X-rays taken from around 6 months of age give an indication of the state of the hips.

The sooner the condition is diagnosed, the better, as there are diets, drugs, supplements and surgeries available that can help alleviate pain and slow down degeneration of the joint and cartilage.