

# Signs of Pain in Dogs and Cats

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