



## **Glucosamine and Chondroitin Supplements: What's in A Name?**

### **A Guideline to Choosing Joint Health Products for Your Dog**

Glucosamine and chondroitin are products known as nutraceuticals, dietary supplements much like a vitamin or mineral. There have been many studies to evaluate the effectiveness of glucosamine and chondroitin on joint health but no definite scientific conclusions have been made. However, we believe that there is enough positive scientific evidence to recommend their use in pets that have arthritis in their joints.

**Glucosamine** is a part of a glycosaminoglycan, one of the small molecules that makes up healthy cartilage. Adding glucosamine to your pet's diet may help improve joint function by decreasing overall inflammation in the joint and increasing the health and longevity of the joint cartilage. The most effective form of glucosamine is **glucosamine hydrochloride (glucosamine HCL)**, because it tends to be more concentrated than other formulations. **Chondroitin** is also found in healthy joints and supplementation with it also seems to help decrease joint inflammation and improve joint health. The most effective form is a **low molecular weight chondroitin sulfate**. Often glucosamine and chondroitin are sold as a combination therapy for joint health. These combination products are the products that we recommend and in testing seem superior to either ingredient given alone.

It is important to note that glucosamine and chondroitin products are not regulated by the Food and Drug Administration. This means that the content and quality of these products is not monitored. Here is a list of things you should be concerned about when deciding on a product:

1. Where did the product come from? One only needs to think about the recent problems with dog food ingredients from China to worry about the sources of these nutraceuticals. Glucosamine is typically produced from shellfish and chondroitin is produced from cow or sheep cartilage. Though the risk is small, you should be sure that chondroitin from cows is from countries that are free of mad cow disease and if from sheep is free from scrapie, a similar neurological disease of sheep. If your pet is allergic to shellfish, then it should not take these supplements.
2. How much is really in the bottle? Unfortunately, companies do not have to be truthful about how much glucosamine is in their product, because the products are not FDA regulated. Recent scientific studies have shown that when tested by an independent laboratory, up to 85% of human glucosamine / chondroitin products did not meet the label claims, many with serious omissions in quantities or qualities of ingredients. The only way to be sure that what you see on the label is what you get in the bottle is



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to call the company and ask for the results of an independent laboratory analysis of their product, or rely on an independent laboratory analysis available from [www.consumerlab.com](http://www.consumerlab.com) on the internet.

The products that we believe meet these requirements and currently recommend are: **Cosequin, Cosamin, Dasuquin, GLC-1000, GNC, Puritan’s Pride, Twin Lab maxilife, Walgreens, Doctor’s Best, and Hydrajoint.**

Many pet food companies have introduced foods for joint health. These foods typically will not contain a high enough glucosamine and chondroitin level necessary for your pet’s body weight, thus you would need to give additional supplements daily. It may be easier to give your pet a known amount of supplement each day along with its regular food rather than trying to figure out how much glucosamine and chondroitin you need to supplement with these diets.

Once you have chosen a product, it is important to be sure you are giving the right amount to maximize its effectiveness. Use this guideline to approximate what dose you should be giving by mouth each day. Glucosamine and chondroitin is safe and the only side effects to be aware of are occasional diarrhea and a remote possibility of blood clotting problems. If your pet is allergic to shellfish you should not give glucosamine! If your dog has diarrhea while on glucosamine/chondroitin stop the medication and call us or your regular veterinarian immediately.

Recommended daily dosing schedule:

	Glucosamine (twice daily)	Chondroitin (twice daily)
10	200 mg	110 mg
20	400 mg	220 mg
30	600mg	330 mg
40	800 mg	440 mg
50	1000 mg	550 mg
60	1200 mg	660 mg
70	1400 mg	770 mg
80	1600 mg	880 mg
90	1700 mg	990 mg
100	1800 mg	1100 mg