

IMMUNE-MEDIATED POLYARTHRITIS (IMPA) DISCHARGE INFORMATION

Your dog has been diagnosed with **immune-mediated polyarthritis**—a condition where the immune system mistakenly attacks the joints, resulting in inflammation, pain, and lameness.

What Is Immune-Mediated Polyarthritis?

This condition causes inflammation in multiple joints without evidence of infection. In some cases, an underlying cause may be found, such as infections (e.g. **Leptospirosis**, **Toxoplasma**, **Neospora**) or certain types of cancer. If a cause is identified, treatment is directed accordingly.

In many cases, however, **no cause is found** and the condition is classified as **idiopathic**.

In rare cases, the inflammation can be erosive (damaging the bone and joint), similar to rheumatoid arthritis in humans. X-rays may be taken to check for joint damage.

Treatment Plan

The primary treatment for IMPA is to suppress the immune system and reduce joint inflammation. This is most commonly done with corticosteroids such as **prednisolone**. If response is incomplete or if higher doses are not tolerated, additional medications such as **azathioprine**, **leflunomide**, or **cyclosporine** may be prescribed.

Monitoring Response

- Your dog's progress will be monitored by evaluating changes in **lameness**, **joint swelling**, and **comfort levels**.
- Repeat **joint fluid analysis (joint taps)** may be recommended to assess response to treatment.
- Once signs improve, medications will be **gradually tapered** over weeks or months to prevent relapse.

Never stop or change the dose of these medications without veterinary guidance.

Possible Complications and Risks

- **Relapse is possible**, even with slow tapering of medications. Contact your vet if you notice renewed lameness, stiffness, or soreness.
- **Corticosteroids** can weaken the cruciate ligament in the knee (stifle), increasing the risk of **cranial cruciate ligament rupture**—a serious injury that may require surgery.
- **Avoid excessive activity** (e.g. running, jumping, or playing off-leash) during treatment to reduce this risk.
- **Blood tests** may show changes to red and white blood cells due to inflammation or medication side effects. Routine monitoring is essential. In rare cases, if blood cell levels are abnormal and unresponsive, a **bone marrow biopsy** may be recommended.

Activity and Lifestyle Recommendations

- **Exercise restriction** is important while your dog is recovering. Short, on-leash walks are recommended. Avoid stairs, slippery floors, and rough play.
- A **balanced, joint-supportive diet** may be beneficial. If weight loss is needed, speak with our team for dietary advice, as maintaining a healthy weight reduces stress on joints.

Ongoing Care

- Regular rechecks are essential to monitor response to treatment and adjust medications appropriately.
- Blood tests will likely be repeated periodically to monitor for side effects of treatment and assess disease activity.

Contact Us



Please contact the clinic if you notice:

- Increased lameness or stiffness
- New or worsening swelling in the joints
- Reduced appetite or energy
- Vomiting, diarrhoea, or other signs of medication side effects

We are here to help guide you and your dog through every stage of managing this condition.