



30-Day Arthritis Management Checklist

A week-by-week guide for the first month after diagnosis

PETSLIKEMINE
ARTHRITIS & MSK SPACE

PET NAME

DIAGNOSIS DATE

PRIMARY VET

This first month isn't about doing everything at once — that's the most common mistake. It's about laying foundations: medication, observation, and a few small changes that compound over time. **Not perfection. Foundation.**

WEEK 1 Stabilise

Get your dog comfortable and understand the medication. Don't try to do more.

- Start the prescribed pain relief exactly as directed.
- Watch for a response — easier rising, more engagement — usually within 3 to 7 days.
- Watch for side effects (vomiting, diarrhoea, reduced appetite, lethargy). If you see any, stop and call your vet.
- Keep a simple daily log: morning stiffness, how they are after exercise, anything notable. *Use our diary template.*
- Don't change exercise yet — keep their routine roughly the same while the medication takes effect.
- Two quick comfort wins: add padding to a thin bed, and put runners on slippery floors.

WEEK 1 NOTES

WEEK 2 Observe and plan

You should sense whether the medication is working. Start planning longer term.

- Book your follow-up for the end of week 2 or start of week 3. Take your log and specific questions.
- If your dog is overweight, have an honest weight conversation with your vet — the single highest-impact change.
- For now: cut down treats, and weigh out food rather than scooping.
- Mentally walk through your home and list problems to solve (bed, floors, food/water, car, sofa, toilet route). Don't buy anything yet.
- Watch for the rebound: if the medication makes them feel great, don't let them overdo it. Build activity gradually.

WEEK 2 NOTES

WEEK 3 Build the foundation

You know how your dog is responding. This is the week to make the changes.

- Sort the bed: a supportive orthopaedic bed, large enough to stretch out, with a low entry and non-slip base.
- Address the floors: runners and rugs along the routes your dog uses most. Highest impact, lowest cost.
- Settle into sustainable exercise: little and often, lead walks, soft surfaces, warm up and cool down.
- Be guided by how they are the next day, not just during the walk. Stiff the next morning means too much.
- Consider one or two evidence-based supplements (omega-3 has the best evidence). Don't buy a shelf full.

WEEK 3 NOTES

WEEK 4 Settle into a rhythm

Step back from intensive management. Live with it, watch, and adjust gently.

- Build in a weekly mental check-in: stiffer or looser than last week? Same distance comfortably? Anything new?
- If managing weight, do a monthly weigh-in — most practices let you use their scales for free.
- Film a short video of your dog walking and rising every couple of months. Date it and keep it.
- Connect with the PetsLikeMine community — read others' stories, ask your questions.
- Plan a second follow-up around 6 to 8 weeks after starting treatment, with specific observations ready.

WEEK 4 NOTES

STOP THE MEDICATION AND CALL YOUR VET IF YOU SEE

Most dogs tolerate arthritis medication well, but a small minority don't. These signs warrant **prompt veterinary contact** — don't try to push through.

- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Reduced appetite
- Unusual lethargy
- A sudden, severe worsening or flare
- Anything else that seems unusual or concerning

How to use. Tick actions off as you complete them. Use the notes line at the bottom of each week to record anything relevant — medication start dates, side effects, small wins. Don't worry if you don't complete every action — the structure is a guide, not a test.

**CONSISTENT
BEATS PERFECT.**