

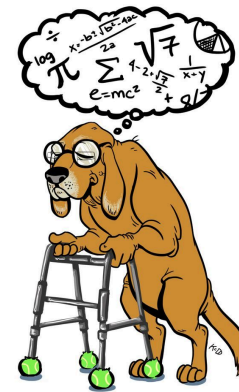


Keep Your Old Dog's Mind Young

As your dog ages, you may notice some cognitive changes. Canine cognitive dysfunction refers to a decline in your dog's mental abilities. It's similar to dementia in humans. Symptoms may vary, and your dog may have 'good' and 'bad' days, where symptoms are more or less pronounced. Often, CCD is referred to as 'Sundowners Syndrome' in the early stages, as owners start to notice behavioral changes as the evening approaches. In general, you should watch out for any change in behavior that lasts longer than two weeks

Signs can include:

- Confusion or disorientation
- Increased sensitivity and reaction to sounds
- Increased vocalization (barking, howling or whining)
- Decreased interaction with humans or other pets
- Less responsive to commands
- Irritability, aggression or anxiety
- Accidents in the home
- Decreased grooming or lack of hygiene
- Repetitive activities
- Wandering or pacing
- Sleeping more during the day and less at night



So what can we do to help our golden oldies?

- ★ ***Develop and stick to a routine:*** The importance of a routine cannot be overstated for dogs with dementia. Doing the same activities and knowing they will be fed and walked at particular times of the day is very comforting for senior dogs, reducing stress they may feel from the other confusing aspects of CCD.
- ★ ***Provide mental stimulation:*** Scientific studies have proven that 'brain teasers' help to preserve cognitive function in dogs suffering from dementia. Items such as food puzzle toys, where your dog has to work out how to release the food, or other interactive toys and games are great choices. Make sure to work at your dog's cognitive level, as they may become distressed if they cannot 'solve' the puzzle – and be mindful that this level may



change over time, or even on a day-to-day basis.

- ★ *Teach obedience or trick training:* Incorporating at least 10 minutes of training each day will help your senior dog to stay responsive to commands, and also provides stimulation. If your dog struggles with concentration, break this down into several sessions of one or two minutes over the course of the day. For example, ask them to do a few commands before you feed them breakfast and dinner, and before you go out for a walk.
- ★ *Provide appropriate exercise:* Dogs with CCD can often struggle with sleep, sometimes seeming to ‘mix up’ their days and nights. Providing plenty of exercise can help them to stay awake during the day and sleep better at night. Exercise and time outside also helps to stimulate their mind and senses.
- ★ *Keep your dog safe outside:* As their cognitive function decreases, your dog may no longer be conscious of certain dangers, such as traffic, or may wander off and be unable to find their way back to you. Keep them on a leash and never leave them unattended outside, even if you have an enclosed yard. Keep your contact details up to date on their ID tag and the microchip database, just in case they manage to escape.
- ★ *Dementia-proof your home:* Pet-proof your home as if you were baby-proofing. Consider all possible potential dangers, including wall sockets, cables, sharp edges on furniture, and breakable items. Secure garbage cans and keep food in dog-proof, airtight containers to ensure your dog isn’t tempted to scavenge for leftovers. No matter how well-trained they once were, as their cognition declines, they may not have the same levels of restraint. Use baby gates to block access to stairs, and lock away cleaning products, pesticides and medicines.
- ★ *Minimize the impact of accidents:* If your dog is struggling with continence issues, make sure you’re taking them outside to do their business more frequently. Consider setting up a dedicated area of the home for your dog with baby gates or playpens, and placing their food and water bowls, bed and toys in this area so you can keep a closer eye on them and minimize the location of potential accidents. Choose a non-carpeted area for easier cleanup, or use doggy pee pads.
- ★ *Speak to your veterinarian about medications and supplements that could help:* There are a number of different medications that can help to slow cognitive

decline, which may be suitable for your dog. In addition, certain supplements such as omega-3 fatty acids, SAME and milk thistle (found in Denamarin Advanced) can help to protect cell membranes in the brain, helping to slow the development of CCD.

- ★ *Provide plenty of patience and love:* Managing your dog's dementia can be exhausting and frustrating at times, particularly as they may stop responding to commands as readily. Try to stay patient with your dog, and shower them with love and quality time. Remember that the experience of dementia can be confusing and frustrating for your dog too, but your love and care goes a very long way to helping them cope with the changes they're experiencing.
- ★ *Monitor their quality of life:* While it's often possible to keep your dog healthy, safe and enjoying life for some time while suffering from dementia, there may come a time where their cognition and bodily functions have deteriorated to the extent that they no longer have a good quality of life. Knowing when it's time to say goodbye and offering your pet a dignified passing is one of the most loving things you can do for them. Keep in close contact with your veterinarian; they can help you to assess your pet's quality of life and provide advice throughout this difficult time.

