

Hip Dysplasia

Canine hip dysplasia is the irregular formation of the coxofemoral joint. This is the joint that joins the femur, the longest bone in the body, to the hip socket. The hip is a ball and socket joint, and the ball (femoral head) must fit well into the socket (cup) for the joint to function properly.

The main contributors to the development of CHD are joint laxity and the depth of the acetabulum (cup). Early signs of CHD include:

Reluctance to go up and down stairs or to jump

Difficulty rising or laying down

Bunny hopping when running, i.e. both hind limbs move together.

Diagnosis is made through radiographic findings, either by the method advocated by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA) or by that of the University of Pennsylvania Hip Improvement Program (Penn HIP) which measures joint laxity. While CHD is among the principal orthopedic diseases in the GSMD, fortunately for Swissies, it manifests itself rarely in a severe and crippling form.

Indeed, unless x-rays are taken, many Swissy owners are not even aware that they have a dysplastic dog. Quite often, mildly and even moderately affected Swissies do not show any or only very subtle clinical signs of the disease.

While treatment options for severely dysplastic dogs are available, we will not discuss them here as they are so rarely applicable to Swissies. Prior to breeding, Swissies should be screened for CHD and evaluated by an established registry such as OFA or Penn HIP. It is preferable to breed only CHD free animals.

Article by Brigitte Rhinehart

[The Dysplastic Hip Joint by OFA](#)

(examples of “Excellent,” “Good” and “Fair” hips of Greater Swiss Mountain Dog as rated by OFA)

