Common Diseases of Older (Senior, Geriatric) Dogs

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In The Aging Process and How We Can Help Older Dogs Adapt, we explain some of the more common and normal changes we can see in the function of the various organ systems in an older dog. Many of these changes are expected. Disease can occur, however, if these changes become severe and the organ or system is no longer able to compensate. The more common diseases seen in older dogs and the signs of these diseases are listed in the table below. Most of the diseases are discussed in detail in separate articles, just one click away.

Common Diseases in Older Dogs	Signs and Symptoms of Disease
Cancer	Abnormal swellings that persist or continue to grow Sores that do not heal Weight loss Loss of appetite Bleeding or discharge from any body opening Offensive odor Difficulty eating or swallowing Hesitation to exercise or loss of stamina Difficulty breathing, urinating, or defecating
Dental disease	Bad breath Difficulty eating or swallowing Weight loss
Arthritis	Difficulty rising Difficulty climbing steps and/or jumping Behavior changes - irritable, reclusive House soiling Loss of muscle
Kidney disease/failure	Increased urination and thirst Weight loss Vomiting Loss of appetite Weakness Pale gums Diarrhea Blood in vomit or black, tarry stool Bad breath and oral ulcers Behavior changes

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Prostate disease	House soiling Dribbling urine Blood in urine
Cataracts	Cloudy appearance to eyes Bumping into objects Not retrieving objects
Hypothyroidism	Weight gain Dry, thin haircoat Lethargy, depression
Cushing's disease	Thin haircoat and thin skin Increased thirst and urination Pot-bellied appearance Increased appetite
Urinary incontinence	Urine in bed or area in which pet was sleeping
Dry eye	Large amounts of yellow-green discharge from eyes
Epilepsy	Seizures
Gastrointestinal disease	Vomiting Diarrhea Loss of appetite Loss of weight Blood in stool Black and/or tarry stool
Inflammatory bowel disease	Diarrhea Vomiting Mucous or blood in stool Increased frequency of defecation
Diabetes mellitus	Increased thirst and urination Weight loss Weakness, depression Vomiting
Obesity	Overweight Exercise intolerance Difficulty walking or getting up Unkempt haircoat, especially in anal area
Anemia	Exercise intolerance Very light-colored gums

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Mitral Insufficiency/Heart disease	Exercise intolerance Coughing, especially at night Weight loss Fainting Panting
Liver disease	Vomiting Loss of appetite Behavior changes Yellow or pale gums
Bladder stones	Difficulty urinating Blood in the urine May show no signs of disease

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