

# Your Senior Pet

**From Head to Toe**

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Hill's Pet Nutrition



## Home Monitoring Tips

**From the American Animal Hospital Association**





There are few greater joys in life than watching your senior pet age gracefully, but sometimes the uncertainty of the aging process can be scary. Senior dogs and cats require special care and monitoring, but knowing what signs of illness to look for in your senior pet can help give you peace of mind.

Here's a head-to-toe breakdown of some signs to watch for. Use this handy guide to make a habit of regular home health checks for your senior and keep the communication lines open between you and your veterinarian.

**Keep in mind that this is not a comprehensive list of every possible symptom or ailment your senior pet can experience, and let your veterinarian know right away if you notice any concerning changes in your pet.**

**My Veterinarian's Contact Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

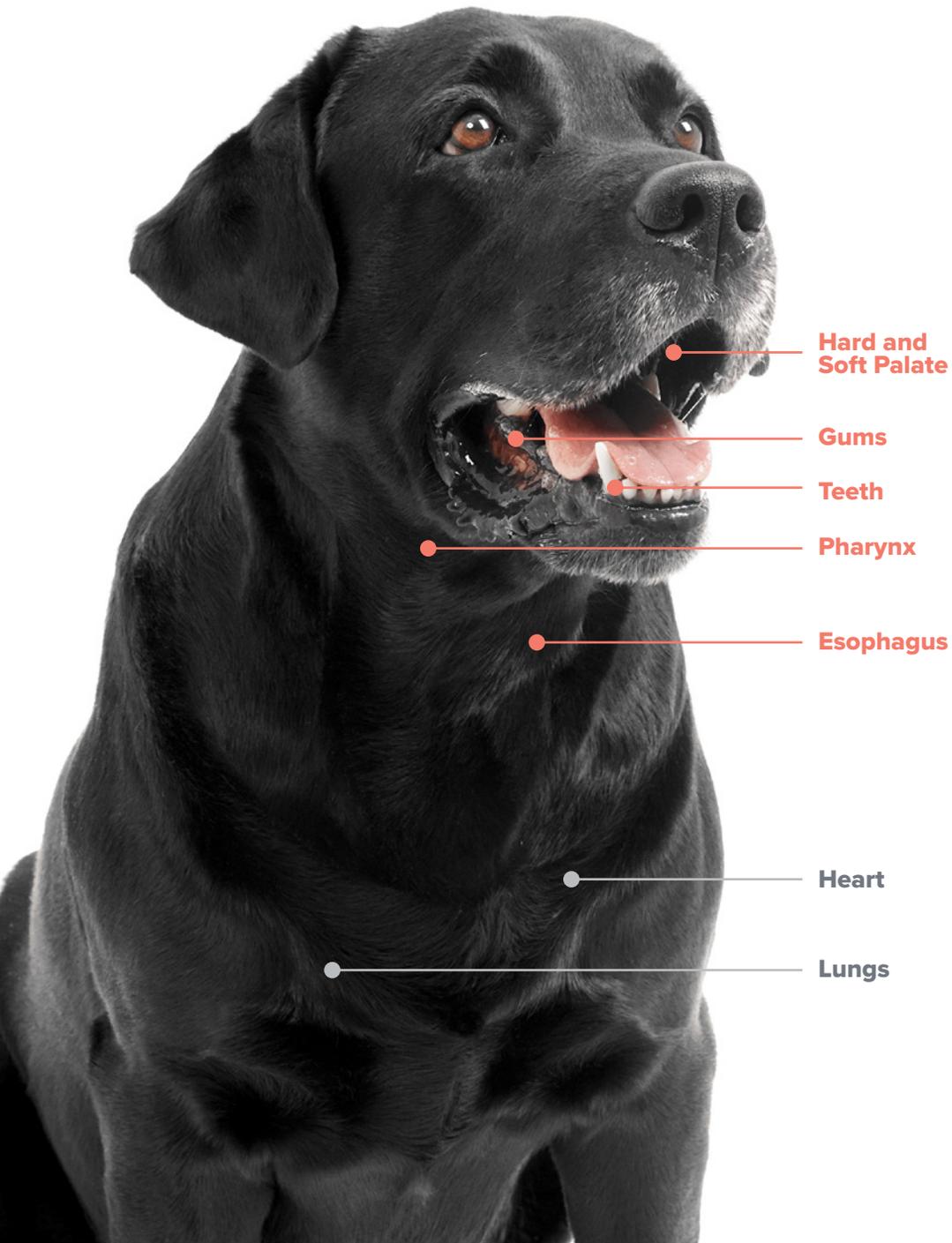
Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Emergency Veterinarian Contact Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_



## Mouth, Teeth, Gums, and Throat

- Make dental home care a priority: daily brushing, approved treats, water additives, etc.
- Use products with a VOHC-approved seal

### ***Call your veterinarian if you see these signs:***

- Dropping food from mouth
- Decreased interest in food
- Guarding of head, mouth
- Drooling
- Difficulty swallowing

## Heart, Lungs, and Chest

### ***Call your veterinarian if you see these signs:***

- Changes in pet's breathing rate  
Use free smartphone apps to monitor resting respiratory rate; search for "Resting Respiratory Rate," "Cardalis," and "Count My Breaths" in the app store
- Cough, abdominal effort, increased breathing effort
- Cold feet or limbs
- Pale or blue gums
- Becoming quickly exhausted or collapsing during exercise



## Brain, Spinal Cord, and Nervous System

**Seek immediate veterinary care if you see these signs:**

**For seizures:**

- Falling to the ground and/or stiffening in legs and body
- Chomping or biting at the air
- Appearing dazed or unaware of surroundings
- Foaming at the mouth or drooling
- Note duration and frequency of seizure, take video to show to your veterinarian

**For vestibular event:**

- Rapid back and forth or up and down eye movements
- Head tilt, falling over, facial droop

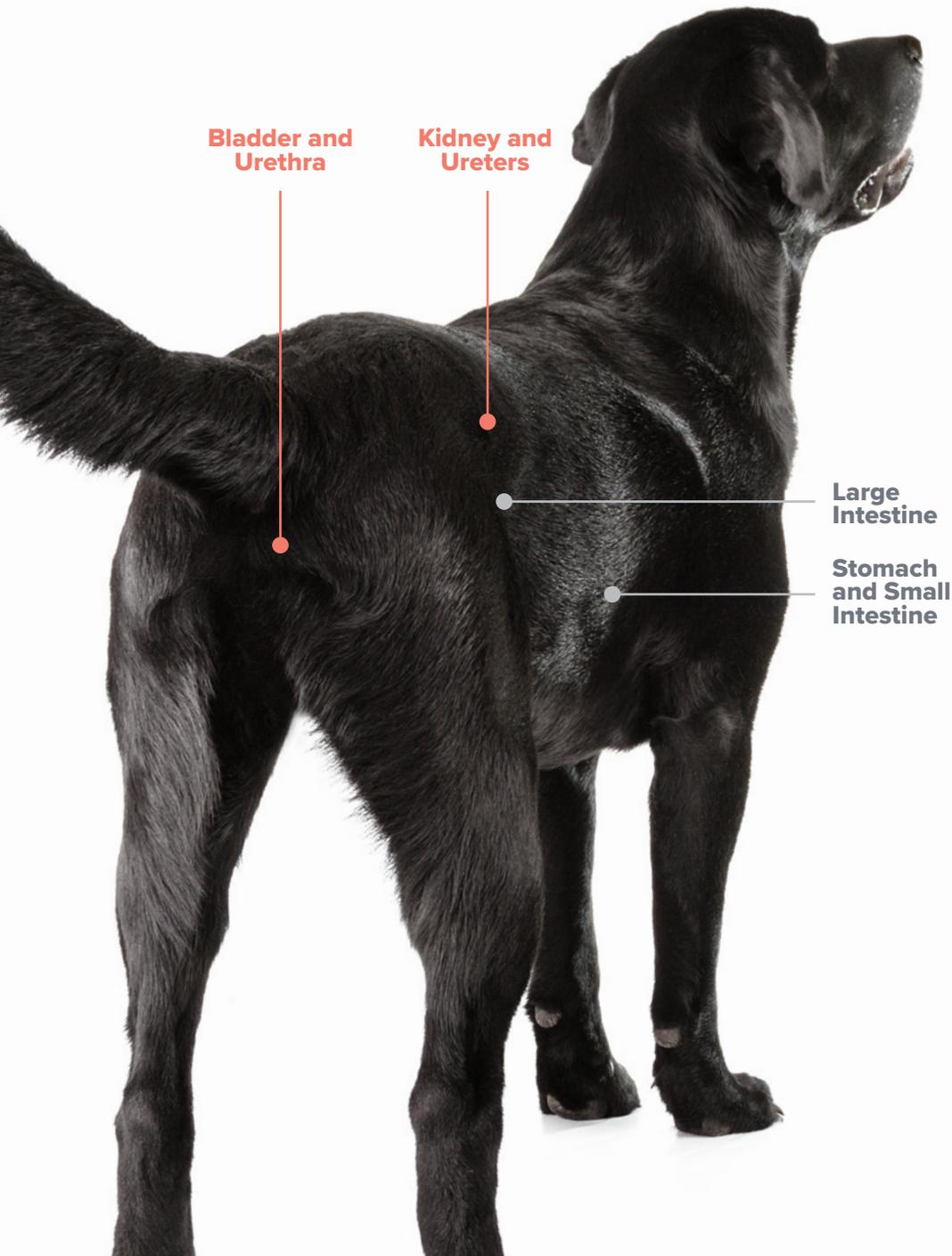
**For spinal cord issues:**

- Decreased mobility, dragging feet, scraped nails (from dragging feet)
- Hunched posture, inability to move back legs, or dragging back legs
- Pain
- Unable to get up on all four limbs

## Inner and Outer Ear Flaps, Skin, Fur, Nails, and Nail Beds

**Call your veterinarian if you see these signs:**

- Changes in nails and nail beds
- Changes in skin: redness, swelling, hair loss, infection, odor, oiliness of haircoat
- Trim nails regularly and monitor length; make sure nails are not curling into pads (pay special attention to dewclaws)



Bladder and Urethra

Kidney and Ureters

Large Intestine

Stomach and Small Intestine

## Urinary Tract and Kidneys

### **Call your veterinarian if you see these signs:**

- Straining, discomfort, and changes in frequency of urination
- Look for changes in urine color, odor, or appearance of blood
- Increased water consumption and urination
- For cats, consider using cat litter that can show changes in urine

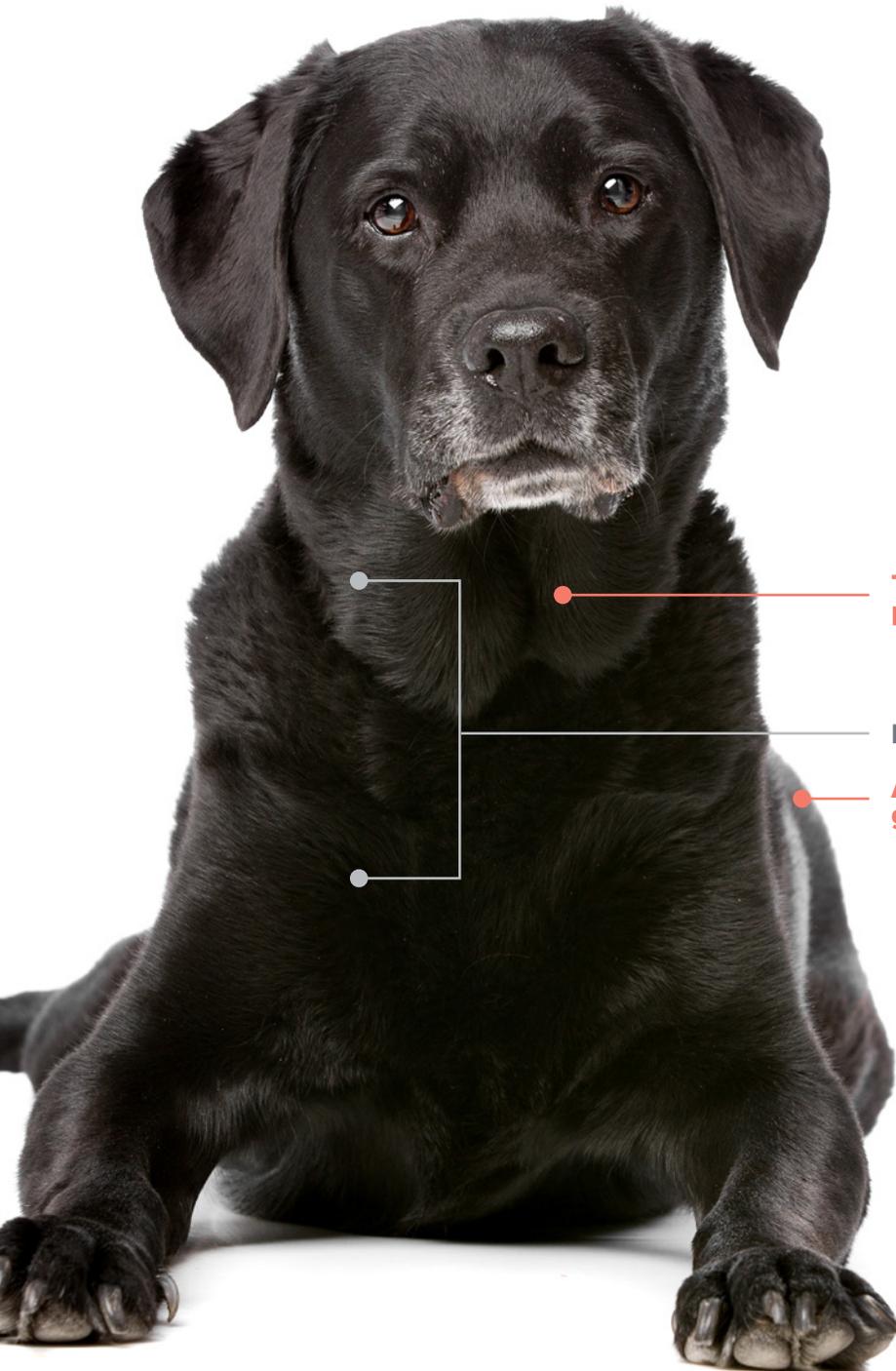
## Stomach, Intestines, Liver, and Gall Bladder

### **Call your veterinarian if you see these signs:**

- Vomiting and diarrhea
- Not eating or decreased appetite
- Changes in stool color: bloody, black and tarry, white stool
- Pain or straining in passing stool, constipation
- For decreased appetite:
  - Try warming food or offering different, highly palatable foods
  - Adding moisture (like a small amount of water) may increase digestibility of food
- Muscle loss
- Weight loss or gain

### **Seek immediate veterinary care if you see these signs:**

- For dogs: retching but not throwing up anything, swelling in abdomen
- For cats: not eating for more than 24 hours
- For both: not eating or drinking, painful, lethargic



Thyroid and parathyroid

Lymph nodes

Adrenal glands

## Endocrine Glands

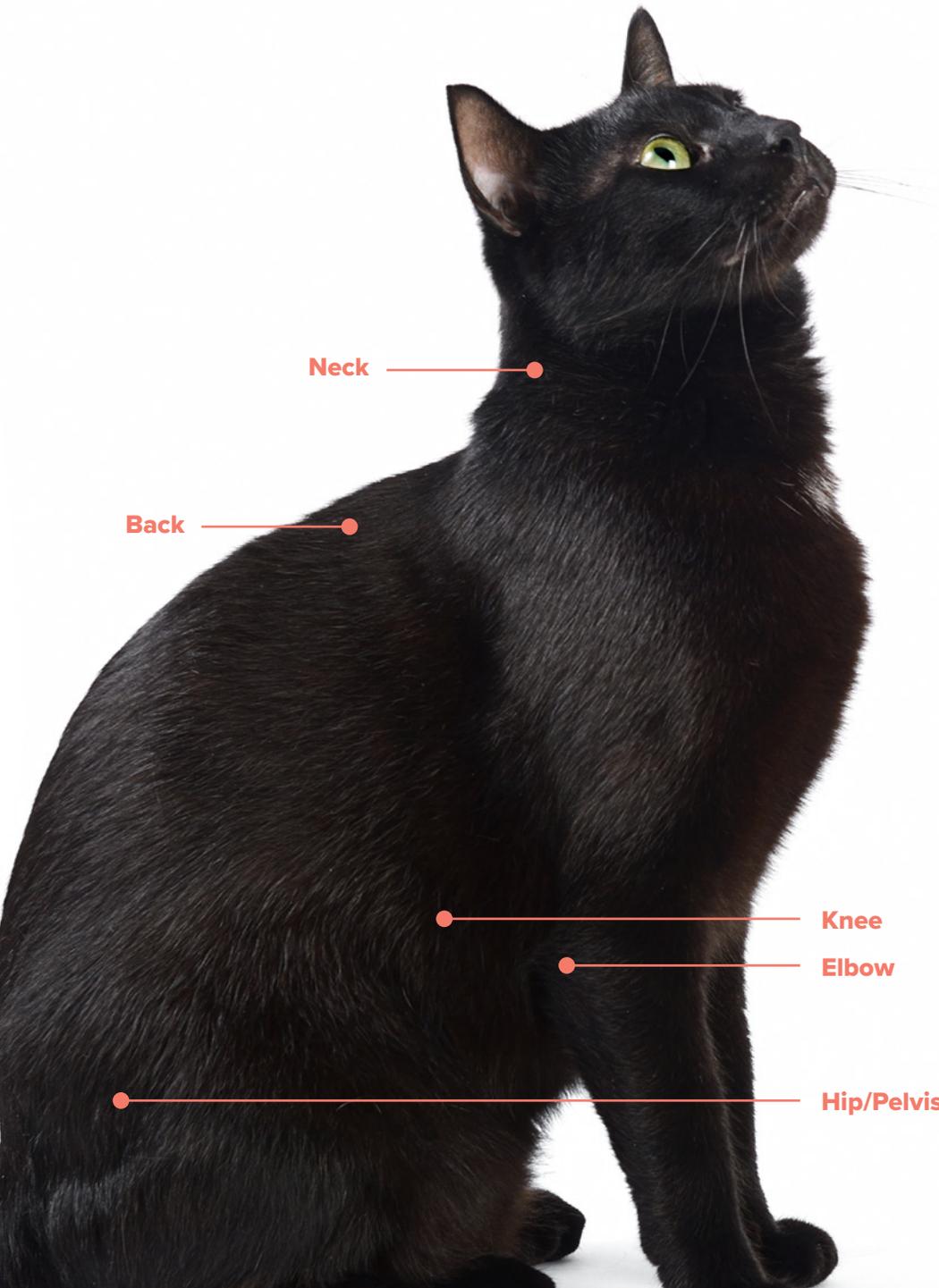
**Call your veterinarian if you see these signs:**

- Increased thirst
- Increased urination, shaking, circling, unexplained hair loss, weight loss or gain
- Distended abdomen, vomiting, diarrhea, increased appetite, decreased appetite
- Weakness, lumps in skin

## Lymph Nodes and Blood Cells

**Seek immediate veterinary care if you see these signs:**

- Progressive weakness
- Abnormal bleeding or bruises, unexplained lameness, pale gums, distended abdomen
- Enlarged lymph nodes or masses noted under jaw, under or around legs
- Bleeding from nose, mouth, in vomit, in stool, coughing up blood
- Bruises or red and purple spots appearing on the skin like the abdomen
- Pinprick red or pink spots appearing on skin or gums
- Gums that are pale or white; not bright pink



Neck

Back

Knee

Elbow

Hip/Pelvis

## Muscles, Joints, and Bones

- Consider orthopedic bedding and heated or cooling bedding options (avoid using heating pads intended for humans, and never leave pets unattended with heated bedding)
- Consider rehabilitation services
- Discuss pain management with your veterinarian

### **Call your veterinarian if you see these signs:**

- Changes in mobility
- Trouble going up or down stairs
- Circling for long periods of time before finding a comfortable place to lay down
- Dragging or not fully picking up back feet
- Reluctance to perform normal activities
- For cats: reluctant to jump, climb, use the litter box normally (may have “accidents” outside of the box)
- Limping, stiffness
- Not grooming as much as usual
- Changes in mood/behavior like irritation or grumpiness