



Caring For Following Cruciate Ligament Repair

Your pet has had a cruciate ligament repair performed to relieve pain associated with his/her knee. In general, we expect that your pet will return to near normal function (approximately 70-80% when compared to an unaffected rear limb). How well your pet will recover is determined by many factors such as: the type of disease or injury that made the surgery necessary; the amount of physical therapy you are able to provide post-operatively; and the age and size of your pet. Generally speaking, small animals (less than 60 pounds) regain better leg function than do larger animals. Likewise, younger animals rehabilitate better than older animals. It is also important to point out that animals that undergo active rehabilitation and physical therapy programs regain better function than those animals who do not. What follows is a basic rehabilitation program for your pet.

Surgery through Week 2: Your pet needs lots of love and attention at this time. The surgery site needs time to heal and the inflammation to subside. Pain medication will need to be given as prescribed. You do not need to worry about extensive physical therapy at this time. With that being said, slowly and gently moving your pet's leg through a normal range of motion for 5 minutes twice daily will be helpful. Do not keep your pet too strictly confined; he/she needs enough room to get up and walk short distances, but not so much space that he/she can run, trot or jump. In order to prevent your pet from slipping and falling, keep your pet in a room where he/she can have stable footing.

Week 3 through 4: Leash activity is appropriate; swimming may also be a helpful exercise for your pet. You should walk your pet on a short, tight leash at a pace that is comfortable for your pet as he/she bears weight on the leg. At first, the pace of your pet will be slow, but the pace will accelerate soon enough. Again, passive range of motion exercises are appropriate, but to be of value, these exercises must be performed for 10 minutes twice daily. You must extend and flex the knee just until it begins to bother your pet a little- then you know you are increasing the range of motion in the hip area and benefitting your pet. Massage therapy, heat therapy, and hydrotherapy are all beneficial as well.

Weeks 5 through 8: As your pet becomes more willing to use the leg, you should begin demanding more. Walks uphill, upstairs, jumping up, standing on hind legs, etc. are in order. These activities places stress on the hind legs, forcing your pet to use them more, and thus strengthening the muscles in the knee.

Weeks 9 through 12: Light call playing is fine, as it requires rapid starts from a stationary position. Athletes may be jogging, jumping, pulling sleds, etc. Playtime with other pets is beneficial. Any activity that forces your pet to use its back legs is appropriate.

It will, on average, take a minimum of 12 weeks for your pet to use the operated leg well. During this period or rehabilitation, it is not unusual for your pet to strain its muscles or stretch the scar tissue that has newly formed in the operative site, causing lameness. This lameness is typically rapid in onset and gradually gets better within 3-5 days. Treatment with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as Carprofen) is appropriate during these episodes. Be sure to contact our office to ensure your pet will be receiving the proper dose prior to giving any medication. If your pet does not seem to be rehabilitating normally, or if you have concerns, you should contact our office to talk with a veterinarian, or schedule a post-operative appointment so that a

veterinarian may examine your pet and determine exactly what is going on and take any necessary steps to correct the problem.

Every dog and each case is unique. If you have questions or concerns, do not hesitate to make us aware of them. If you have any questions or problems during your pet's rehabilitation, call our office. A staff member or veterinarian is available to speak with you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

PROPER RESTRAINT

Your pet may still be slightly groggy from the anesthesia as he/she leaves the office. To prevent any injury, it is best to have your pet in a carrier or on a leash when leaving the clinic. A carrier will ensure the safety of your pet and decrease any chance of injury during the ride home. Upon arriving home, provide a quiet area where your pet can fully recover over the next 12-24 hours.

ELIMINATION

The gastrointestinal tract can be affected by general anesthesia and pain medication. This may result in your pet having soft stools or constipation for 24-36 hours following the general anesthesia and surgical procedure. Some dogs may have bright red blood on their stools associated with stress. If any changes persist beyond 36 hours, please contact our office.

SUTURES

Suture material was used to close the incision; the sutures need to be removed in 10-14 days. You should check your dog's incision daily. Excessive swelling, redness or discharge should be reported immediately to our office. There should not be any bleeding. If your pet's incision begins to bleed or have any discharge, call our office immediately. Some licking is expected; if your pet begins to lick or chew obsessively at the incision sight, we can provide you with a special collar to prevent complications.

MONITOR

While we feel confident your pet will recover normally, there are risks associated with any episode of general anesthesia. Call our office if you note any abnormalities over the next week. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Loss of appetite for more than 2 days
- *Refusal to drink water for more than 1 day
- *Weakness or listlessness
- *Vomiting

PAIN MEDICATION

Begin administering your dog's pain medication this evening.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about your pet's follow-up care, please call our office immediately!