

Post Surgical Care of FHO

Home patient care after orthopedic surgery is critical to the success of the surgery. Allowing your pet too much activity may alter the anticipated outcome of the surgery. Remember, this surgery is a “salvage” procedure designed to eliminate future arthritis and pain from the damaged or diseased hip joint and although the joint will never be “good as new”, most pets will have pain free function of the leg when walking. Your pet will not have “full range of motion” and may experience a slight limp, but this is due to the “false joint” that forms higher up on the pelvis and is not a sign of any pain or discomfort. Many pets will carry the leg when trotting as a result of the limited range of motion of the new joint. Patients without pre-surgical arthritis tend to heal faster and better than patients with arthritis.

The following instructions will be your guide to home care:

(Note: if your pet is walking normally, no matter how soon after surgery, you may stop all rehabilitation exercises but continue leash restriction for a minimum of eight weeks to allow full healing of soft tissues.)

Week 1:

1. Provide pain management with NSAID's the first five days
2. Apply an ice-pack to the hip for 10 to 15 minutes two to four times a day for the first 24 to 36 hours after surgery
3. If inflammation has resolved after 72 hours, apply a hot-pack to the hip for 10 to 15 minutes two or three times a day
4. Perform passive range of motion exercise (gently flex and extend the hip); 20 to 30 times, slow repetitions three times a day
5. Begin slow leash walks of less than 10 minutes three times a day even though your pet will probably not be using the leg at this time

Weeks 2 & 3:

1. Apply a hot pack to the hip for 10 to 15 minutes two or three times a day until the swelling has resolved
2. Stop passive range of motion exercise if your pet is using the leg correctly
3. Increase the slow leash walks to 10 to 20 minutes three times a day
4. Schedule a recheck with your doctor ten days after surgery to remove any sutures and evaluate range of motion and percent weight bearing
5. Most patients begin to “toe touch” when standing by week 2, but every pet is different and some may take longer

Weeks 4 & 5:

1. Increase the slow leash walks to 20 to 30 minutes two or three times daily
2. Have your pet perform 10 repetitions of sit-stand exercises three times a day
3. Have your pet perform 10 to 15 repetitions of figure-of-eight walks two or three times a day, circling to the right and left
4. Have your pet sit against a wall for 10 to 15 repetitions two or three times a day, keeping the affected leg next to the wall
5. If available, swimming exercises for one to three minutes twice a day is helpful
6. Most pets will be putting some weight on the leg at this point in time on a slow walk but hold it up on a trot or run

Weeks 6 - 8:

1. Schedule another recheck with your doctor six weeks after surgery to evaluate your pet's progress
2. Take your pet on leash walks for 30 to 40 minutes once a day, slow enough to ensure that your pet is weight bearing on the affected limb
3. Take your pet on incline walks or hills or ramps for 5 to 10 minutes once or twice a day
4. Take your pet up a flight of stairs, if available, 5 to 10 times slowly twice a day
5. Continue swimming if possible
6. Most pets will be using the leg with a moderate limp at this point in time

Weeks 9 - 12:

At this point, your pet's limping should be slowly getting less and less and activity should gradually return to full activity by the end of 12 weeks.

1. Take your pet on faster 30 to 40 minute walks once or twice a day
2. Take your pet for a run-straight only, no turns-for 10 to 15 minutes twice a day

Additional Instructions:

1. Licking at the incision should be discouraged because it may lead to chewing at the sutures or staples causing a wound infection. It may be necessary to bandage the leg or use an Elizabethan collar to prevent licking.
2. Feed your pet its regular diet but reduce it by 10% to allow for reduced activity.

3. Mild swelling may occur near incision or low on limbs. Your veterinarian should check moderate or severe swelling immediately.

Complications

As with any surgical procedure, complications can occur. Unlike human patients who can use a sling or crutches, our patients do not know enough to stay off a healing leg so restricted activity is a major responsibility of you, the pet owner. Failure to follow these instructions carefully can lead to delayed healing.

The most common complication is delayed healing, where, despite our best efforts individual patients respond slower than others. In larger pets or pets with pre-existing arthritis, it can take up to twelve months for a full recovery. As long as you are noticing some improvement on a month to month basis, healing is still progressing.

If your pet does not improve after four weeks and the leg use is not satisfactory, physical therapy with a trained veterinary physical therapist can be very rewarding. Rarely, infections can develop and will need to be treated with antibiotics. Notify your veterinarian if you notice any discharge from the incision. Lastly, some pets will have some contact between the end of the femur and the pelvis entrapping muscles between them and causing pain which can usually be treated with anti-inflammatories. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask your veterinarian or call me at the number above.

Follow Up Instructions:

- Recheck in ten days: Sutures / Staples removal / Dissolving with your regular doctor
- Please monitor your pet's ability to urinate over the next 1-2 days. Very rarely, patients that had an epidural will have transient urinary retention, straining to urinate but no stream is observed. This can lead to a ruptured bladder after several days and kidney failure if you do not seek immediate treatment.
- Start antibiotic and pain medication tonight
- Tegaderm clear bandage can be left on until it falls off or at suture removal
- Start Dasuquin, Cosequin, Phy-Cox-JS or Glycoflex (joint supplement) ASAP
- Start essential fatty acid supplement, ie. Derm Caps to reduce joint inflammation ASAP
- If your pet is not noticeably improving his/her use of the leg every two weeks, recheck with Dr. Newman

- Call Rod Newman, MS, CCRP to schedule physical therapy after suture removal to reduce recovery time at 615-414-4867 or you can email him at rnewman@caninerehabnashville.com (cost included in surgery fee).
- If you want to do comprehensive physical therapy at home on your own, please visit www.topdoghealth.com and purchase a step by step guide to post-surgical home therapy for pet owners titled FHO-Femoral Head Ostectomy for \$19.95.