Post Surgical Care of Patella Luxation Repair

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.

Your pet had the following procedure(s) done:

- Imbrication of soft tissues lateral to the knee cap was done to tighten the stretched joint capsule and keep the patella from luxating.
- Deepening of the femoral groove so that the knee cap can seat deeply in its normal position was performed with high speed specialized surgical saws and drills.
- Transposing the tibial crest, the bony prominence onto which the tendon of the patella attaches below the knee was done to help realign the quadriceps, the patella and its tendon. This involves cutting a small piece of bone with a surgical saw and holding it in its new location with one or two small surgical pins.
- Correction of abnormally shaped femur was repaired by cutting the bone, correcting its deformation and immobilizing it with a bone plate.
- Fabellar/patellar large gauge suture placed to anchor the patella in the femoral groove and prevent it from luxating.
- Fabellar/tibial suture placed to correct rotational instability of proximal tibia and align patella tendon to a normal position.
- Medial desmotomy to release the shortened and thickened tissues on the medial side of the patella to allow the knee cap to move back to a normal position.
- Injected Marcaine (local anesthetic) in the joint.
- Injected Adequan (joint protectant) in the muscle.

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 bone healing.)

**Week 1:**

1. Provide pain management with NSAID’s the first five days
2. Apply an ice-pack to the stifle (knee) for 10 to 15 minutes two to four times a day for the first 24 to 36 hours after surgery if no bandage
3. If inflammation has resolved after 72 hours, apply a hot-pack to the stifle for 10 to 15 minutes two or three times a day if no bandage
4. Perform passive range of motion exercise (gently flex and extend the knee); 10 slow repetitions three times a day (as much as bandage will allow if still on)
5. Precede and follow the passive range of motion exercise with massage of the quadriceps muscles (large muscles above the kneecap)
6. Begin slow leash walks of less than 10 minutes three times a day (dogs only) but keep cats restricted to a confined area with no jumping

**Weeks 2 & 3:**

1. Apply a hot pack to the stifle for 10 to 15 minutes two or three times a day unless 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. Continue massage
5. Schedule a recheck with your doctor 2 weeks after surgery to remove any sutures and evaluate range of motion, limb girth, and percent weight bearing
6. Most patients begin to bear some weight by week 3, but every pet is different and some may take longer
7. Cats can start to roam the house but try to discourage jumping onto high places like counters

**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 (dog only)
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 (dog only)
4. Have your pet sit against a wall for 10 to 15 repetitions two or three times a day, keeping the affected knee next to the wall (dog only)
5. If available, swimming exercises for one to three minutes twice a day is helpful (dog only)

6. Cats should be well enough to have full house activity but no outside activity

**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 (dog only)
4. Take your pet up a flight of stairs, if available, 5 to 10 times slowly twice a day (dog only)
5. Continue swimming if possible

**Weeks 9 - 12:**

At this point, your pet’s healing should be complete and should gradually return to full activity by the end of 12 weeks. Outdoor cats can now be allowed outside once again if no lameness is present.

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

**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. Bandages, if used, should always be kept dry and clean. Any odors and/or persistent licking are indicators that there may be a potential problem and **should be checked by your veterinarian immediately.** Bandages and splints should be checked weekly by your veterinarian or veterinary technician.
3. Feed your pet its regular diet but reduce it by 10% to allow for reduced activity.
4. Mild swelling may occur near incision or low on limbs. Your veterinarian should check moderate or severe swelling immediately.
5. Use of a joint protective supplement with glucosamine and chondroitin is highly recommended for at least six months if your pet does not have arthritis. If your pet does have arthritis, it is recommended to use this supplement for the life of your pet.
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 limb so restricted activity is a major responsibility of you, the pet owner. Failure to follow these instructions carefully can lead to delayed healing or even failure of the sutures and implants. The most common complication is delayed healing, where, despite our best efforts to stabilize the joint, individual patients respond slower than others. Occasionally, your pet may develop a small pocket of fluid called a seroma, around the metal pin we use to secure the transposed bone. See your veterinarian if this swelling is larger than a grape. Lastly, although this surgery has a ninety percent success rate, some patients will still have a lower grade patella luxation than before surgery. Fortunately, most will have no discomfort and not need additional surgery. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask your veterinarian or call me at the number above.

If your pet is not using the leg somewhat by three weeks, please call Dr. Newman to set up a recheck. Additionally, if your pet starts using the leg and then stops using the leg or stops improving week by week or worsens week by week, call Dr. Newman to set up a recheck.

Follow Up Instructions:

- Support/pressure bandage placed post-operatively to be removed/rechecked in 4-5 days
- Please monitor your pet’s ability to urinate over the next 1-2 days. 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.
- Recheck in ten days: Sutures / Staples removal / Dissolving sutures
- Recheck every 2 weeks after suture removal to evaluate progress
- Start antibiotic tonight
- Tegaderm clear bandage can be left on until it falls off or at suture removal
- Start pain medication tonight
- Start Cosequin, Glycoflex, PhyCox-JS or Dasuquin MSM (joint supplement) tomorrow
- Call Rod Newman, MS, CCRP to schedule your initial physical therapy consultation at 615-414-4867 or 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 MPL-Medial Patella Luxation for $19.95.