

Care of your dog following surgery to correct patella luxation

The following medications have been dispensed for your dog. Please ensure **all doses** are given. If you are having difficulty administering medications or your dog develops diarrhoea or vomiting, please contact your vet **immediately**.

Medication:

Key Points for Aftercare:

The operation site will have been clipped (other sites may also have been clipped for administering drugs and fluids etc). Avoid your dog interfering with the surgical (and other clipped) site/s. Most wounds will be covered with a light adhesive dressing, and this often works loose or can be removed, after three to five days. Some dogs need to wear an Elizabethan protective collar to prevent attention to the stitches or dressings. If necessary, this should stay in place until the stitches are removed. Your dog mustn't be **allowed** to lick the surgical wound, as this may introduce infection.

Some swelling of the operated limb following surgery is normal (especially fluid accumulation around the hock). **Ice packs** for 10 to 15 minutes every 2 to four hours (if possible) **are recommended** in the first few days following surgery to reduce swelling and improve comfort.

Regular, gentle massage (sweeping motions from ankle to hip) may help dissipate oedema fluid. Range-of-motion exercises on the operated limb may be performed several times daily, but **ONLY** if tolerated. Exercise each major joint of the limb e.g. hock (ankle), knee, hip with “bicycle” movements.

If the surgical site is causing excessive irritation, is **discharging** or if you are concerned **swelling** is excessive, please contact your vet.

Laminate or slippery surfaces should be avoided or covered temporarily; a slip could result in serious injury. Stairs should be avoided and made inaccessible.

Visitors should be instructed not to encourage excitement during visits. Children in the house should be informed of the temporary restrictions and the importance of following these.

Confinement and permitted activity:

Confine appropriately to eliminate **running** and **jumping** for 8 weeks; chose appropriate confinement to achieve this for your dog; a large cage is recommended for the first month. A room with non-slip flooring and no furniture (to avoid jumping) may suffice for weeks 5 to 8. Short **leash** walks in the garden (a few minutes four to six times daily) are recommended to allow toileting. It is imperative that running, jumping and playing are avoided.

- Two weeks following surgery: commence lead walking for 5 minutes at a time, two to three times daily.
- Three weeks following surgery: continue lead walking to 5 minutes at a time, two to three times daily.
- Four weeks following surgery: increase lead walking to 10 minutes at a time, two to three times daily.

Confinement should be maintained **at all other times**; running, jumping and playing should be avoided.

Re-examinations with your vet:

- The morning after surgery if your dog was discharged the same day as the surgery
- **3 - 5 days** following surgery: post-surgery check-up
- **10 to 14 days** after surgery: check on wound healing (suture/staple removal where present).
- **4 weeks** following surgery: X-rays will typically be taken so please bring your dog in fasted
- **8 weeks** following surgery: progress check

Gradual improvement should be expected following surgery. If deterioration occurs, please contact your vet immediately.

Variations from these aftercare instructions may increase the risk of post-surgical complications or otherwise affect the outcome; only make variations if **specifically advised** doing so by your vet.

Rehabilitation following 4-week radiographs:

Weeks 5 – 16: assuming satisfactory follow-up radiographs **and** clinical progress, the following rehabilitation program is recommended:

If anti-inflammatories are still being used begin to gradually reduce the dose. If no deterioration is evident as the dose is lowered continue to gradually reduce and stop dosing within several weeks

Hydrotherapy, and particularly water treadmill hydrotherapy is beneficial to recovery; ideally twice weekly, for 8 to 10 sessions.

Lead activity may gradually increase; walking in uncut grass (ideally, elbow to shoulder height) will encourage increased flexion of all joints (higher limb lift) promoting the strengthening of flexor (hamstring) muscles. Incline walking e.g. gentle hills will aid extensor (thigh) muscle strengthening.

- Five weeks following surgery: increase lead walking to 15 minutes at a time, three times daily.
- Six weeks following surgery: increase lead walking to 20 minutes at a time, three times daily.
- Seven weeks following surgery: increase lead walking to 25 minutes at a time, three times daily.
- Eight weeks following surgery: increase lead walking to 30 minutes at a time, three times daily.

Confinement should be maintained **at all other times for eight weeks**; running, jumping and play should be avoided.

A gradual return to off-lead exercise may commence between 8- and 10 weeks post-surgery provided there is no discernible lameness and hindlimb muscle mass is relatively symmetrical between the two limbs. Allow 5 minutes off-lead towards the end of an afternoon/evening walk. If well-tolerated, increase the duration by 5 minutes each week.

Unrestricted stair access and rough play with other dogs should be prevented for a minimum of 4 months following surgery.

Ball chasing should be avoided for at least four months and should ideally be minimised in the longer term