



Lone Star Veterinary Surgical Services

Surgical Solutions for Your Loved Pets

Postoperative Care: Femoral Head and Neck Osteotomy

Your pet has had a femoral head and neck excision performed to relieve pain associated with his/her hip. 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. Some of the things that determine the how well your pet will recover include: the type of disease or injury that made this surgery necessary, the amount of rehabilitation you are able to provide post-operatively, the age and size of your pet, and whether your pet builds a good scar tissue pad and muscle around the hip socket. Typically, small animals (less than 60 pounds) regain better leg function than do larger animals, and younger animals rehabilitate better than do older animals. Importantly, animals that undergo an active rehabilitation program regain better function than those that do not. What follows is a basic rehabilitation program for your pet following this surgery.

- Please have your pet wear an e-collar for 10-14 days to protect the skin incision.
- You will need to return to your doctor for suture removal in 10-14 days.
- A physical rehabilitation consult with a certified Rehabilitation Veterinarian is recommended.

Immediately 72 hours post-op:

Your pet needs your love and attention during this time. The surgery site needs time to heal as the inflammation subsides. Pain medication and mild sedation is typically used to ensure the best comfort for your pet.

An ice pack (with a cloth in between the skin and the ice pack) can be applied to the incision site 2-3 times daily for 10-15 mins. There should be no free access to stairs, jumping, running, or playing with other dogs/family members. They can be walked outside ON LEASH for 5 mins, 3-4x daily for toileting and “sniff breaks” only. Light massage to the muscles of the surgical leg and paw is beneficial during this time to help with fluid movement and prevent joint stiffness.

Day 3 through 2 Weeks:

The goal during this time is to encourage early weight bearing.

- Passive range of motion and holding the hip in gentle flexion and extension for 10 reps 2-3 times daily. Only take the hip to a point of resistance, then hold in that position for 5



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seconds. This should not be painful, and the range should increase as recovery progresses.

- Slow controlled leash walking, including a slight incline after the 1st week, for 10-15 mins, 2-3 times daily. Ensure that your pet is using all limbs and not just hopping on 3 legs while walking.
- Encourage weight shifting by lifting the opposite hind paw 1 inch off the ground and having your pet stand on 3 legs for 2-5 seconds. Repeat this 5 times twice daily.

Weeks 3 through 4:

The goal during this time is consistent weight bearing while walking.

- Increase leash walks to 15-20 mins 2-3 times daily. Incorporating uneven terrain, inclines/declines, and a small number of stairs.
- Sit to stand exercises - This will help strengthen the hip muscles and work to improve the hind limbs range of motion actively. Have your pet sit in front of you for a few seconds then have your dog stand, take a step forward and then sit again. Start with 5-10 reps twice daily and increase the reps by 5 weekly.
- Stand with the front paws on an elevated surface, hold this position and encourage even weight bearing on both hindlimbs. The height of elevation can be slowly increased as strength is regained.

Weeks 5 through 8:

- Increase leash walks to 20-30 mins 2-3 times daily. Light jogging can be started if lameness does not increase afterwards.
- Continue all exercises as above – increasing in the repetitions and times performed daily.
- Place 4-6 PVC/broom/mop handles on the ground far enough apart that your dog has a single step in between each bar (usually the distance is the length from the back of their shoulder blades to the top of their hips). Walk next to your dog and encourage them to walk over the poles with control. Perform 5 repetitions 1-2 times daily. This exercise can be progressed weekly by increasing the number of repetitions and raising the bar height gradually, but NEVER raise it to above your dog's wrist!!
- Your pet is now able to go up stairs and begin light play with other pets and family members, and GRADUALLY start returning to normal activity. Anything that encourages controlled use and full range of motion of the hind limbs is encouraged.



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It will, on the average, take a minimum of 12 weeks for your pet to use the operated leg well. During this period of 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 over 3-5 days. Treatment with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (Carprofen, Previcox, etc.) is appropriate during these episodes. Be sure to contact your veterinarian to ensure that your pet will be receiving the proper dose prior to giving any medication!

If your pet does not have consistent weight bearing on the operated leg by 6 weeks after surgery, or if you have concerns, you should schedule a recheck appointment with your veterinarian. This will help determine if there are any complications and help us take the proper steps to correct the problem if needed. If you have any questions or problems during your pet's rehabilitation, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for letting Lone Star Surgical Specialists take care of you and your pet!