

Post-operative Information: Extracapsular Repair of Cruciate Ligament Injury with Patella Stabilization

Your pet has had his/her knee surgically stabilized following *injury to the cranial cruciate ligament*, a major ligament inside the knee joint. Additionally, a long-standing *patella luxation* (i.e. dislocating kneecap) was stabilized. After the healing period, the new stability will reduce the discomfort and on-going cartilage damage, but will not completely eliminate the changes that lead to degenerative joint disease ("arthritis"). With proper aftercare, the prognosis for your dog is good to excellent. It is important to recognize that healing from this repair is similar to healing from a broken bone, and requires specific care for a good outcome.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTION x 6 weeks

- No RUNNING, JUMPING, or FURNITURE ACCESS for 6 weeks. STAIRS ONLY WITH ASSISTANCE/GOOD TRACTION.
- Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe indoor location without access to stairs for the next 24 hours as he/she recovers from anesthesia & surgery. Your pet may be groggy for the first few days. He/she may whine or appear more anxious than usual; this may indicate pain/discomfort or side-effects of the medications. Please call your veterinarian for assistance with medication adjustments, or return for exam & additional pain medications as needed.
- It may be several days before your pet defecates (poops) due to medications given related to the surgery.
- Confine your pet to one level/section of the house on carpeted floors. Use baby gates, etc. to prevent access to slippery floors or stairs. Do not allow jumping on/off furniture. Confine to a small area/room/crate when unattended. For dogs, use a short leash when going outside to urinate/defecate.
- Your pet will feel like fully using the leg before the knee is healed. Please continue the restriction during this difficult time when he/she is feeling "too" well! Failure to do so may cause serious healing problems.

INCISION CARE

- A wound dressing may have been applied to the incision. It may be removed in 3 days if present. Remove it sooner if there is blood visible under the dressing (strike through).
- Please look at the incision once daily. It should be dry, slightly red along the margins, and slightly swollen/thick on the edges. Over several days, it should lose redness and swelling. *Problems to call your veterinarian about:*
 - a) gapping (the edges should be exactly touching); b) discharge (other than small amount of blood); c) swelling (other than slightly raised skin near edges). Some bruising is normal and will resolve in 5-7 days.
 - b) Swelling of the ankle past the incision is common, and will resolve in a few days.
- Do not allow your pet to lick or chew the incision as this can compromise the incision and predispose to infection. If necessary, please use an E-collar or Lick Sleeve if you must leave your pet unattended.

LICK SLEEVE

- If you are using a Lick Sleeve, please still check the incision each day. Unbuckle and roll the sleeve down from the top. It should be wrapped back around the belly twice to properly fit.
- It may be trimmed at the bottom to fit your pet's leg if needed.
- Unbuckle for bathroom breaks if interferes with urination (males).
- Wash if becomes soiled. Line drying is recommended. We may be able to provide a second one for a fee.
- Most questions may be answered at: <https://www.licksleeve.com/pages/faq>
- It is reversible for use on the opposite leg if needed in the future.

PROGRESS EXAMS

- Return to your veterinarian in 10-14 days for a progress exam. Skin healing and leg function will be evaluated, sutures will be removed, and any physical therapy questions will be addressed.
- Your pet should start touching his/her toe down within the first 2 weeks. Thereafter, leg use should steadily improve to 90% normal at 6-8 weeks. If you notice a sudden deterioration in leg use at any time after surgery, please see your veterinarian for exam.

DIET

- Ideally, keep your pet on the thin side of normal his/her whole life. Any orthopedic condition can progress with arthritis over time due to excessive wear & tear; carrying less body weight will relieve some of this stress from the joints. Good parameters to monitor body condition are: 1) you should be able to feel the ribs and pelvic bones, but not see them; 2) your pet should have an "hour glass" figure when viewed from above looking down; 3) your pet should have a tucked up belly when viewed from the side.
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- Fish oil (added to food or in capsule form) is advised in patients with joint problems. Although there is some debate about effectiveness, using fish oil as an additive shows great promise. A good dose range is about 100mg/kg body weight. For an example, a 75 pound dog (34kg) would get about 3400 mg per day. There are also joint focused diets that have fish oil already added to them.

- Glucosamine/chondroitin supplements (“chondroprotectants”) might have some beneficial effects in these patients, but this has not been clearly established. You and your veterinarian should discuss whether or not these products would be helpful for your pet.

PHYSICAL THERAPY REGIMEN

(We can also recommend professional physical therapy assistance in the Twin Cities. Studies have shown that a formal program can decrease post-operative recovery time. Please let your veterinarian know if you are interested in a referral.) ***A video demonstration of exercises can be found on our website: www.clvsurgery.com under the “Post-Operative Care” section ***

- Our lives are often very busy, so if you must err, err on the "do less" side of these instructions. Less PT will result in a slower return to function, but more aggressive physical therapy by a non-professional too early may result in failure of the implants and surgical repair.
- **Week 1-2 (Day 1-14): Icing:** Cooling the surgical area will reduce pain and swelling. Do this as often as possible the week following surgery- several times a day. You may start this *with the Lick Sleeve in place, if present*. Apply ice packs (wrapped in thin cloth once bandage is removed) to the incision area twice daily for 15 minutes. Baggies of frozen peas work well for this, or make an ice pack by freezing 2 parts isopropyl alcohol to one part water in a ziplock bag.
- **Range of Motion (ROM) Exercise-** Have your pet lie on his/her good side. Grip the front of the thigh with one hand and hold the foot with the other. Slowly push the foot up into flexion of knee and then slowly pull the foot and push the thigh down and back into extension of knee. Repeat this motion slowly and smoothly *10 times twice daily*. Flex and extend only to your pet's comfortable limit. Do not go to the point of creating pain or resentment. Following ROM, apply ice packs as described above.
- **Indoor walking--**Lay out a path that will allow you and your pet to turn corners and walk around objects on one level of the house with solid/non-slip flooring. Place your pet on a short leash. Walk slowly enough so that your pet has to put each foot down and does not hop. If he/she is barely putting foot down, stop every few steps and ask your pet to back up a few steps. Walk your path for *5 minutes twice daily*. Use small treats to encourage participation.
- **Week 3-6: Sit/stand Exercise (for dogs)--**Have your pet repeatedly sit and stand for *10 repetitions twice daily*. Use small treats to encourage participation. Do not push down on his/her rump.
- **Continue ROM Exercise:** As above. At the end of each motion (flexed/bent knee and extended/straighter knee), hold for 5 seconds. Discontinue icing unless desired/recommended. A warm compress may be used before ROM to warm the joint.
- **Walking-** for 5 minutes twice daily; add 5 minutes each week until your pet is walking a normal pace at least 20 minutes twice daily and using the operated limb every step. Use small treats to encourage participation. Avoid walking locations that will result in uncontrolled activities, such as meeting other dogs, ice, etc. Use small treats to encourage participation.
- **Massage-** Your pet may stand or lie down. Perform both superficial skin massage & deeper muscle massage. Skin massage around the knee joint involves using your hand loosely conformed to the surface of the skin; enough pressure is applied to move the skin relative to the underlying tissues. Muscle massage of the thigh and shin involves deeper kneading and pushing of the muscles. Perform massage for 10-15 minutes twice daily.
- **Week 7**
- **Expanded walking-** Place your pet on a short leash and have him/her walk at your side. Walk outside with varied but gradual incline with solid footing for 10 minutes twice daily. Continue 4 weeks, gradually increasing time and distance.
- **Light play exercise-**On a long leash, encourage playing and romping with your dog for 15 minutes twice daily. Use toys for teasing and tugging. Continue 2 weeks.
- Swimming is wonderful rehabilitation exercise when performed correctly. You may allow controlled swimming after week 6. Controlled swimming requires that your pet not jump or leap into the water; *walking into the water until it is deep enough to swim is required*. Throwing balls to fetch often results in sudden jumping and lunging, which can cause serious problems in the healing phase. Do not over extend you pet; start with short excursions (5 minutes) and increase duration and frequency gradually.

LONG TERM LIFESTYLE

- After the knee is fully healed, there are no restrictions on activities for your pet. A gradual return to full function should occur, to allow for a smooth return of muscle function and strength following the restricted period. If stiffness and lameness develop over time, intermittent and occasional use of anti-inflammatory/pain-relieving medications can help improve knee function as needed.
- Occasionally the implants that were placed in the leg to stabilize the knee will cause irritation and lameness. These are easily and quickly removed under short anesthesia if a lameness persists after 6 weeks. Additional fees apply.
- It is very common (approximately 50% of patients) for both knees to develop cruciate ligament injury. Prevention is difficult; the most effective thing you can do toward prevention is to maintain your pet on the thin side of a normal weight.