

# ORTHOPAEDIC HOME RECOVERY PROGRAM



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Uncontrolled pain can slow down the healing process and delay your pet's recovery. We will have supplied medications to alleviate this post surgical pain, please give as directed. Your pet still needs to be restricted to avoid compromising the surgery even if they appear to feel good! Allowing him/her to move around freely or to 'over do it' may lead to prolonged recovery and potentially additional surgeries.

After the surgery your pet is going to limp on the surgically repaired leg for a period of time. Your pet should be placing some weight on the surgical leg (even just touching toes to the floor) within 10 days from the date of the surgery. Over the course of the next few weeks the degree of limping should decrease. If your pet is too active during recovery, his/her limp may become more severe. If this is the case allow 48 hours of rest and give any prescribed pain medication. Call us if there is no improvement after the 48 hour period.

**No licking!** Allowing your pet to lick at the incision will compromise the healing process. Licking introduces bacteria to the area and, in severe cases, can cause infection to not only the incision but to the bone itself. We have supplied you with an Elizabethan Collar to prevent your pet licking the incision site.

## MONITOR YOUR PET'S INCISION SITE

NORMAL	ABNORMAL
Swelling around the incision and the surgical leg for the first week post op	Swelling that lasts longer than a week
Bruising on the leg	Discharge that is not clear, is blood tinged, or any discharge after the first few days post op
A small amount of clear or blood tinged discharge from the incision (for first few days only)	Large amounts of discharge or bleeding
Mild discomfort around the incision and the leg itself	Discomfort after pain medications
Warm to the touch around the leg	Discomfort that causes your pet to cry out or bite

*If any abnormal signs appear, please contact us immediately*

*The incision should be healed 10-14 days after the surgery.*

## WEEK BY WEEK RECOVERY PROGRAM

The weekly recovery program is designed to -

- Accelerate your pet's recovery to full function of the leg
- Reduce pain and muscle atrophy (muscle loss and weakness)
- Strengthen muscles to help stabilise and support the joint
- Enhance the healing of the affected bone and tissue due to increased blood flow
- Restore normal joint range of motion
- Decrease the risk for future injury

The physical therapy exercises should be started slowly and cautiously. It is best to time these approximately 30 minutes after you administer your pet's pain medications so that he/she is most comfortable. Watch for signs of discomfort such as struggling or significant resistance to the exercises. Signs of pain can include: excessive panting, vocalisation, aggression or decreased interaction with family members, altered posture (hunched posture), restlessness and flinching when touched. If your dog is stiff and reluctant to allow further manipulation you may need to reduce the amount of physical activity and/or request additional pain medications. Your pet may be tentative at first but his/her comfort level will increase as you progress.

Here is our suggested week to week rehabilitation plan with an explanation of each activity below. Following these guidelines will dramatically improve your pets recovery.

### PRINTABLE PDF OF REHABILITATION EXERCISE CHART

## REHABILITATION EXERCISE CHART

(Each exercise is explained below the chart)

Stage of Recovery	Exercise/Manual Therapy	Frequency	Time/Repetitions
0-14 Days post op	PROM & Controlled leash walks	Daily	2-3 times per day for the first week or until range of motion is normal compared to the opposite limb
<b>AT THIS TIME YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR A WOUND CHECK. WE WILL ALSO ASSESS YOUR PETS PROGRESS AND MAKE ADJUSTMENTS TO YOUR REHABILITATION PROGRAM AS NEEDED.</b>			
WEEKS 3-4 (if patient is consistently using the leg)	PROM	1-2 times/week	10 mins
	Controlled leash walks	3 times/day	15 mins
	Weight shifting	Once a day	2 mins
	Figure 8/weaves	Once a day	2 mins
	Cookie stretches	Once a day	5 reps working up to 10
	Sit to stand	Twice a day	5 reps working up to 10
	Three legged standing	Twice a day	2 reps working up to 4
	PROM	1-2 times/week	10 mins
	Controlled leash walks. Add in short trot intervals and hills to increase fitness	3 times/day	Incorporate into total walk time (up to 40mins/day total)

Stage of Recovery	Exercise/Manual Therapy	Frequency	Time/Repetitions
WEEKS 5-8	Weight shifting. Add unstable footing (mattress, yoga mat) to further challenge	1-2 times/day	4 minutes, add 1 minute per session per week
	Cookie stretches	1-2 times/day	Add 3-5 reps per session per week. Up to 15 reps per session
	Sit to stand	Twice a day	Add 3-5 reps per session per week. Up to 15 reps per session
	Two legged standing	Twice a day	30 secs each side
<b>AT THIS TIME YOU WILL NEED TO MAKE A FOLLOW UP XRAY APPOINTMENT TO ASSESS BONE HEALING. WE WILL INFORM YOU IF YOU ARE READY TO PROGRESS TO THE FOLLOWING ACTIVITIES.</b>			
WEEKS 8-12 POST OP	*Activities can be continued as above <b>with the addition</b> of the following		
	Off leash activity	Daily	20 mins working up to 60 mins

## PROM - Massage and Passive Range of Motion

Massaging your pet's leg is important for relaxing the muscles prior to performing the exercises for rehabilitation. Lay your pet on his/her side on a comfortable surface with the surgical limb up. Target the muscles above and below the joint. Start the massage by pressing down on the muscles with the heel of your palm. You should not move your hand over the skin, but instead press down hard enough to move the skin over the tissues below. Using the heel of your palm, it's unlikely that you will press too hard and possibly injure healing tissue. Then run the flats of your hands over the whole massaged area. Finally, flex and extend the affected limb several times, gently, until a little resistance is felt. Support the joint while doing this to prevent any twisting of the limb. It is also a great way to practice your technique on "the good leg" to build your confidence

## Controlled Leash Walks

This exercise requires your pet to be on a short leash. Leash walks must be done slowly and for short periods of time to build up strength in the leg. For the first few days any walks outside should be **for toilet breaks only**. By the end of the first week, your pet should be able to walk for 5 minutes per walk. The slower you walk your pet the more inclined he/she will be to place weight on the leg. Make sure to support the hind end under the belly with a rolled towel if needed. This is particularly important on slippery surfaces. Your pet will benefit more from several short walks in one day rather than a single long walk.

2 weeks post-op you can add 3 x 5 minutes per walk per day. This activity should only be increased if your pet is consistently using his/her leg at a walk. You can incorporate activities such as: Figure 8 patterns, walking up and down curbs in a S-pattern, gentle inclines (hills),

Controlled leash walks benefit your pet by:

- Keeping the muscles strong and lubricating the joints
- Encouraging use of the affected limb
- Decreasing pain
- Positively rewarding your dog emotionally
- Stepping over obstacles/through long grass, and short trotting intervals (10 steps) into these walks to make them more challenging and to increase muscle mass and strength.



## Weight Shifting Exercise

Have your pet stand squarely on a non-slip surface and gently nudge the hind end from side to side for 10 repetitions. This will help with balance and core strength and will lay the groundwork for further core conditioning. For a further challenge, have your pet stand with the front legs elevated (first on a stable surface like some stairs, and then on an unstable one like a cushion, air mattress). This will force more weight onto the hind end.

## Figure 8/Weaves

Walking on a lead, have your pet walk in a figure 8 or weave pattern. This exercise helps to encourage the use of the leg and increase proprioception.

## Cookie Stretches

Have your pet stand squarely on a non-slip surface and guide his nose to each hip, up, and then down for one repetition. Do this 5 times working up to 10 repetitions. Once s/he is comfortable with this exercise, you can place him/her on an unstable surface such as a couch cushion (on the floor), air mattress. This exercise will help with spinal mobility and core strengthening.

## Sit-to-Stand

This exercise is a “Doggy Squat”. Have your pet sit squarely and then stand for 5-10 repetitions. This can also be incorporated into daily walks or, at feeding time, you can use part of his kibble to entice him/her to do this exercise.

## Three Legged Standing

Have your pet stand squarely on a non-slip surface and then gently lift one leg off of the ground and hold for 5 – 10 seconds. Alternate with all but the surgical limb. Once your pet becomes good at this exercise, you can try two legged standing by lifting diagonal legs (left front and right hind) and vice versa.

## ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LONG TERM JOINT HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

### Weight Management

The best way that you can extend the lifespan and quality of your pet's life is by maintaining a lean and fit body condition. Studies show that dogs that are maintained at an ideal weight for them will likely live 15% longer than dogs that are overfed. We suggest decreasing food intake by 10% during the recovery process due to reduced activity levels

### Joint Health

We have stabilised your pet's stifle with this surgery but with any injury to a joint, there is an increased chance of developing osteoarthritis. Osteoarthritis develops over time with inflammation in joints and leads to the formation of osteophytes (bone spurs) around the joint, which can cause pain. We recommend 4Cyte Epitalis Forte liquid to be given daily



### Life-long physical fitness

Physical activity is important for your dog's overall health and wellbeing. Dogs with regular physical activity live longer, healthier lives and have less behavioural problems.

## AFTER 12 WEEKS

By now, your pet's repaired tibia should be healed completely as long as there have been no post-operative complications. Although the bone may have healed, there is still plenty of conditioning required for the muscles and tissues that support the knee joint. As a rule, it takes 2 – 4 times as long to build muscle as it does to lose it. This means that for every 1 week of inactivity leading to muscle atrophy, 2 – 4 weeks are needed to rebuild that muscle mass. It may take 6 months before your dog's hind legs have equal muscling. Studies show that there is a 60% chance that your dog will injure the cranial cruciate ligament in the *other* leg. This is why it is so important to keep your dog lean and active for life.

*Thank you for entrusting us with the care of your pet  
Good luck with Post Op Rehabilitation*

*Feel free to contact us if you have any concerns*