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KNEE SURGERY AFTERCARE

Knee surgery in the dog, whether it is a synthetic ligament replacement, tibial tuberosity advancement (TTA), or tibial plateau leveling osteotomy (TPLO), is a major reconstructive joint surgery. It is very important to limit your pet's activity during the healing process.

When outside, the pet must be leash walked (on a short 4-foot leash) until your veterinarian gives the "OK" for unrestricted activity. This will usually occur around 8 weeks after surgery. No jumping, ball playing, or activity with other pets should be allowed. When left unsupervised, confinement to a small room without furniture or crate is necessary to restrict activity and avoid damage to the recuperating leg. The dog should not be allowed to roam free in the house, run, jump, or go up and down stairs unsupervised. Do not allow the pet to run or jump when the doorbell rings, or a person or another animal passes by a window. A sling or towel should be used to assist rising, walking on slippery surfaces, or going up stairs.

For the first 10-14 days, activity is restricted to 3-5 short leash walks daily to allow normal urinating and defecating. After the sutures are taken out, the distance of the walks can gradually increase each day. If the pet gets fatigued with the distance traveled, decrease the distance the next exercise session. When outside, **your pet must be on a leash (4-foot) at all times**. Slippery floors should be avoided. Sit-to-stand-to-sit exercises can start 2-3 weeks after surgery. Walking sideways up and then down an incline can start 3-4 weeks after surgery. Swimming, if possible, can start 3-4 weeks after surgery. Start with short swimming exercise sessions (10-15 minutes) then gradually increase to 20-30 minute sessions daily or every other day.

If there is increased soreness after any of the exercise sessions, decrease the frequency, duration, and intensity of the sessions the next day and gradually increase the level of exercise. A warm moist towel or gel pack may be placed around the knee for 10-15 minutes before exercising and then ice for 10-15 minutes after exercising.

Bruising and or swelling are expected at the surgery site and are usually worse the first 3-4 days after surgery. Ice packs generally help lessen the swelling. Place a thin wet towel over the knee and then place on ice pack (crushed ice in a zip lock bag, frozen peas, human gel pack) on each side of the knee. Ice the leg 3-4 times a day for 10-20 minutes for the first 3-4 days. The next 3-4 days, ice the leg 1-2 times a day. It is common for the joint below the knee to swell (the hock joint), gentle massage of this swelling helps the swelling resolve more quickly.

In the average dog, it takes 6-8 weeks for the initial healing to occur. Increased function of the limb occurs over the next 4-5 months.

If you have any questions please contact us.