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Post Surgical Care and Rehabilitation for ACL Repair

Physical Rehabilitation

Week 1

1. Apply an ice pack (or frozen peas) to the knee for 10 minutes 2-3 times daily.
2. After 2 days, start passive range of motion exercises--10 slow repetitions 2 times a day for 7-10 days.
3. Precede and follow the passive range of motion exercise with massage of the quadriceps (thigh) muscles.
4. After 5 days, begin slow leash walks of less than 10 minutes 2-3 times a day.
5. Let us know if you would like sedatives to keep your pet quiet while s/he is healing!
6. Please contact the **Canine Rehabilitation** physical therapists 1 week after surgery. They will set you up with a physical rehab program that is most appropriate for your dog's current progress and give you GREAT advice for the future as well. 303-762-7946 www.dog-swim.com. Cost is approx \$75. They also provide hydrotherapy, expert massage, acupuncture and other forms of physical therapy. Your dog will benefit tremendously from their expertise. If you are unable to see them, continue the rehab regime below.

Weeks 2 and 3

7. Apply a cold pack to the knee for 10 minutes 2-3 times a day until swelling has resolved. Thereafter, you may apply a cold pack anytime (10-15 minutes) if swelling is present, or if your pet is uncomfortable after exercise.
8. Stop passive range of motion exercises if your dog is using the limb correctly.
9. Increase the slow leash walks to 10-20 minutes 2 times a day.
10. Continue massage of the quadriceps.

Weeks 4 and 5

1. Increase the slow leash walks to 20-30 minutes 2 times a day. You may use a longer leash or flexi-leash.
2. Perform 10 repetitions of sit-stand exercises 3 times a day.
3. Have your dog perform 10-15 repetitions of figure eight walks 2-3 times a day.

Weeks 6, 7, and 8

1. Schedule a **follow up examination** 6 weeks after surgery to evaluate their progress and look for evidence of problems.
2. Take your dog on leash walks for 30-40 minutes once a day, slow enough to ensure that they are weight bearing on the affected limb.
3. Take him/her on incline walks of hills or ramps for 5-10 minutes 1-2 times a day.

4. Have them go up a flight of a stairs (on a leash) 5-10 minutes 1-2 times a day.
5. Mild, off-leash, supervised activity can be started. Used your dog's comfort level as your guide.

Weeks 9- 12

At this point, your dog's healing should be almost complete and they should gradually return to full activity by the end of 12 weeks.

1. Take your dog on faster 30-40 minute leash walks 1-2 times per day, as long as they are comfortable.
2. Massage, ice packs, and anti-inflammatory meds as needed.
3. Gradually increase their off-leash, supervised activity.

After 3 months, your dog should be able to return to full activity, but please do so gradually! Unfortunately, some dogs have intermittent pain (limping) after periods of activity. If so, ice the knee for 10 minutes and give them anti-inflammatory medications. Do not wait until later that day or the next day when the inflammation and pain has set in. We will be happy to provide you with a prescription if you feel this is needed. Anti-inflammatories also help prevent arthritis (a chronically inflamed joint becomes an arthritic joint), so don't hesitate to use them!

There is a large suture that has been placed in the joint, and it sometimes causes irritation and limping. If this occurs, it can be surgically removed. The procedure is short and routine, and costs approx. \$200 to perform.

For eight to twelve weeks following surgery, strict confinement and supervision is REQUIRED.

- When not under your direct supervision, they need to be confined in a kennel or small area. Do not let them outside unsupervised – one sudden run can undo the surgery!
- Please do not allow your dog to play with other dogs. If there are other pets in your household, you will need to keep them separated as best as you can.
- During the 3-month recovery, your pet's food intake needs to be reduced to help prevent weight gain. Most dogs will maintain their current weight if their intake is cut by 25%. Their water intake should remain normal.
- During the rehab period, your dog will always benefit more from several short walks in one day rather than a single long walk.
- During the first 2 weeks, if your dog is bothering the incision, purchase a protective collar to prevent infection.
- If your dog seems to have an ongoing lameness or you feel that s/he is not progressing as expected, try resting them for 5 days, ice pack twice daily for 10 minutes, give anti-inflammatory meds (ie rimadyl or deramaxx) at night, massage the thigh muscles twice daily, then slowly resume their physical therapy at a lower level.



- **One of the most difficult aspects of confinement is that the animals will frequently feel better long before they are healed. At this point your pet will more active and more likely to injure the joint. Until it is healed, it is more prone to injury and you must be more vigilant to adhere to the confinement guidelines and not allow your pet to do more. Tell us if you'd like a prescription for a light sedative!**
- It is important that you call us if your dog has a sudden setback. There is no charge for a recheck exam during the 3-month recovery period.

Normal stifle (knee)

Injured stifle

Other important information:

- Keep your dog lean. There is no treatment regimen or pill that will help your dog more to prevent arthritis and pain.
- Unfortunately, their injured knee will always be prone to arthritis. Start them on a glucosamine supplement IMMEDIATELY. Glucosamine protects the cartilage from eroding into the bone – don't wait until arthritis has already developed! We carry the product Adequan, which is a highly effective form of glucosamine. It is given by injection at home, which we can demonstrate for you. It really isn't difficult to give the shot, and after an introductory dose, only needs to be given 1-2 times per month.
- **After they heal, daily exercise is essential** – if only for a walk around the block! Mild to moderate daily exercise strengthens hip muscles, maintains flexibility, and promotes joint fluid production by the joint capsules.

Please call us if you have ANY questions or concerns!

Thank you,
The Staff of CVAH

