



Postoperative Care: Femoral Head and Neck Excision

Your pet had surgery to relieve a significant amount of pain associated with its hip problem. You can generally anticipate a 70-80% return to normal function in the operated leg following this type of surgery. The ultimate outcome will be determined by many factors, which include the type of disease that made the surgery necessary, the age and size of your pet, the amount of effort you place in rehabilitation, and whether or not your pet builds a good scar tissue pad in the area of the socket. Generally speaking, small animals (less than 60 pounds) regain better leg function than larger animals, and younger animals rehabilitate better than older animals. Importantly, animals that undergo an active rehabilitation program fare better than those that do not. The following is an attempt to outline an average rehabilitation program for your pet following surgical removal of the “ball” of the hip joint.

Surgery through 2 weeks: Your pet needs some tender loving care only. No exercise is indicated although you may gently move your pet’s leg through a normal range of motion for **5 minutes twice daily**. We need to give the operative site time to heal. Pain medication and tranquilization may be needed.

Weeks 3 through 4: Leash activity is appropriate. You should walk your pet on a short, tight leash at a pace that allows your pet to use the leg. At first this will be very slow, but the pace will quicken soon enough. Again, passive range of motion exercises are appropriate, but to be of value they must be performed for 10 minutes, twice daily and you must extend and flex the hip just until it begins to hurt your pet a little – then you know that you are increasing the range of motion in the hip area and benefiting your pet. Massage therapy, heat therapy, and water massage are all beneficial as well.

Weeks 5 through 8: As your pet becomes more willing to use the leg, you should begin demanding more. Walking uphill or upstairs, in deep sand at the beach, jumping up, and standing on the hind legs are all allowed. These activities place stress on the hind legs, forcing your pet to use them more, and thus strengthening the muscles and new scar tissue that is forming in the area where the ball of the hip joint used to be.

Weeks 8 through 12: Light ball playing is fine, as it requires rapid starts from a stationary position. Athletes may be jogging, jumping, pulling sleds, etc. Playtime with other pets is beneficial. Any activity that forces your pet to use its back legs is appropriate.

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 time. Treatment with a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, approved for dogs is appropriate during these episodes. **Be sure to contact your veterinarian before giving your pet any medication.** If your pet does not seem to be rehabilitating normally, or if you have concerns, you should schedule an appointment



VCA Animal Specialty Group

5610 Kearny Mesa Rd., Suite B | San Diego, CA 92111
858-560-8006 | www.vcaanimalspecialtygroup.com

so that we may see your pet and determine exactly what is wrong and take the proper steps to correct the problem.

If you have any questions or problems during your pet's rehabilitation, please do not hesitate to contact us. Thank you for trusting us with the care of your pet.