

POST SURGERY CARE INSTRUCTIONS

Cruciate Ligament Surgery



Introduction

Cruciate ligament surgery is a major orthopaedic operation requiring care and attention in the postoperative period to allow healing of bone and soft tissue. These instructions have been developed for your pet's safety and to maximise outcome. Failure to follow these instructions may result in serious complications including bone fractures and broken implants, additional surgery, prolonged recovery period and additional costs.

Wound Care

Check the wound twice daily for any swelling, redness, discharge, breakdown and suture removal (if present). Contact your vet if you notice any of these signs. If your pet licks/chews at the wound you will need to collect an Elizabethan collar from your vet immediately. It will need to be worn at all times until the wound has completely healed (10-14 days).

Medication and Food

Pain relief and antibiotics will be prescribed.

Feed your pet his/her normal diet. If your pet is overweight, consider reducing the amount fed to prevent weight gain during the recovery period.

Optional: Pentosan Polysulfate Sodium (PPS) injections (Cartrophen, Zydax) starting at around 10 to 14 days postoperatively and subsequent injections are given weekly for 4 weeks. These injections help to improve joint health when osteoarthritis is present.

Follow Up Appointments

The first appointment will be within the first week after surgery for a wound check and to remove the Fentanyl patch (if present).

The second appointment will be 10 to 14 days after surgery for a wound check +/- suture removal and the first of four PPS injections.

At around 6 weeks postoperatively an xray of the stifle should be taken to assess bone healing.

Weeks 1-6: Confinement, Rest and Recovery

In the first week, cold packs can be applied to the surgery site to reduce bruising (up to 15 mins, three times daily).

Fluid-like swelling may develop around the lower leg in the first 3-5 days. Gentle massage from the toes upward can help to improve circulation and resolve the swelling.

Strict rest must be enforced for the first **6 weeks** to allow healing. This means your pet should be **confined** to a wire crate (for small dogs/cats), wire crate/pen (for medium breeds), small room or run (for large/giant breed dogs) with non-slip flooring for the duration of this period. The only exercise allowed is short-duration (10 minutes maximum), slow walks on a leash for toileting purposes. **No** running, jumping, stairs or playing with other dogs allowed during this time. Take care to avoid slipping when walking on wet or smooth surfaces. A towel can be used as a sling if it is placed underneath the abdomen in front of the back legs. By doing this you can provide support in the early post-operative period.

Professional physiotherapy/rehabilitation and hydrotherapy are beneficial in restoring muscle mass, reducing soft tissue discomfort and maintaining joint movement. This can be started before surgery or within the first week after surgery. A contact list has been provided should you wish to make an appointment.

Weeks 6-12: Exercise program

Assuming your pet is using the leg well six weeks after surgery and the xray shows good bone healing, slow lead walks can be started. Leash walks should be minimal for the first week (10 to 15 minutes twice daily), and then gradually increased. Between weeks 6 and 12, exercise can be increased slowly to 30 to 40 minutes twice daily. There should be no unsupervised exercise, and running and jumping should be avoided until 12 week post-surgery. By 12 to 16 weeks the patient should have returned to near normal activity.

There is a large variation in how quickly individuals return to full function following cruciate ligament surgery surgery. If there is not near normal activity by 12 to 16 weeks post-operatively, please arrange an appointment for reassessment.

Emergency

If you are worried about your pet's progress out of business hours you should contact your regular vet or your nearest emergency center: AES Underwood 3423 1888, AES Carrara 5559 1599, ARH Sinnamon Park 3172 0593, Pet Emergency Stafford Heights 3359 5333, Pet Emergency North Lakes 3384 2233, BVECCS Albany Creek 3264 9400, AEC Woolloongabba 3456 0500.