

Physical Therapy After Cruciate Surgery

Studies have shown that a formal program can decrease post-operative recovery time. Please let us know if you are interested in a professional physical therapy referral.

We understand that you have busy lives and each patient is different. If you are not sure if something is right for your pet do not hesitate to ask. Less physical therapy will result in a slower return to function, but more aggressive physical therapy by a non-professional too early may result in failure of the implants and surgical repair. Our veterinarians can also discuss Laser Therapy as part of your physical therapy regimen.

Heat Therapy: Superficial heat can provide pain relief, decrease muscle spasms, increase tissue elasticity, increase vasodilation, and decrease blood pressure.

How To: Apply warm packs for 10-15 minutes before any physical therapy. You can make your own heat pack by immersing a towel in hot water or placing a damp towel in the microwave. Place towel in a plastic bag and place on affected area. Be sure towels are not too hot because they can cause burns.

Cryotherapy: Cold therapy can reduce inflammation, edema formation, muscle spasms, and pain.

How To: Cryotherapy can be used for 10 to 15 minutes after each physical therapy session. You can use commercial ice packs, frozen bags of vegetables, or create your own in a zip lock bag by freezing 2 parts of isopropyl alcohol to 1 part of water. Always place a blanket or towel between the ice pack and skin. Be sure surgical incision stays dry and clean.

Week 1: Range of Motion (ROM) Exercise: Have your pet lay on their good side. Grip the front of the thigh with one hand and hold the foot with the other. Slowly push the foot up into flexion (bend) of the knee and then slowly pull the foot and push the thigh down and back into extension (straight) of the knee. Concentrate on the extension movement. Repeat motion **SLOWLY** and **SMOOTHLY** 10 times once daily. **Flex and extend only to your pet's comfortable limit.** Do not go to the point of creating pain or resentment.

Walking: Make a path that will allow your pet to walk on a flat non-slip surface. Place your pet on a short leash. Walk slow enough so that your pet has to put each foot down and does not hop. If he/she is barely putting the foot down, stop every few steps and ask your pet to back up a few steps. Walk a path for 5 minutes twice a day. Add 5 minutes (total) each week until your pet is walking 20 minutes at a controlled pace twice daily. As the weeks progress, encourage your pet to walk figure eights and circles in both directions.

Week 2: Expanded ROM Exercise: Have your pet lay on their good side. Grip the front of the thigh with one hand and hold the foot with the other. Slowly push the foot up into flexion of all joints; **HOLD** for 5 seconds. Slowly pull the foot and push the thigh down and back into

extension of all the joints; hold for 5 seconds. Repeat this motion 10 times twice daily for 4 weeks. Again, do not go to the point of creating pain or resentment.

Week 3: Sit/Stand Exercise: This exercise helps build quadriceps and hamstring muscles. Have your pet repeatedly sit and stand for 10 repetitions twice daily. Use small treats to encourage participation. Never push down on your pet's hips or rump. To encourage proper knee flexion squarely have your pet sit against a wall, in a corner, or between an assistant's legs. Continue for 4 weeks.

Week 4: Massage: Your pet may stand or lie down. Perform both superficial skin massage & deeper muscle massage. Skin massage around knee joint involves using your hand loosely conformed to the surface of the skin; enough pressure is applied to move the skin relative to underlying tissues. Muscle massage of the thigh and shin involves deeper kneading and pushing of the muscles. Remember to not press directly on joints and move in an upwards motion toward the hips. Perform massage for 10-15 minutes twice daily for 4 weeks.

Week 5: Continue the above

Week 6: Outside Walking: Be sure your pet is on a short leash and have him/her walk by your side. Walk outside on even/solid footing. At this time you can introduce mild hills (such as a driveway). You may also place PVC pipes or poles on the ground so your pet can make strides between the poles. Be sure that your pet makes turns in both directions. Take these walks to 20-30 minutes for 4 continuous weeks.

Week 8: Before increasing activity confirmation radiographs must be completed at the veterinarian. If the bone is not completely healed continue the above procedures until radiographs confirm healing. If the bone is healed you may start to increase walk speed and/or incorporate a light jog. If your pet is jogging be sure to keep to a maximum of 10 minutes twice daily.

Week 9: Continue the above

Week 10: Light play exercise: Keep your pet on a long leash and encourage play by using toys to tease and tug.

Swimming: Swimming can be incorporated in a controlled fashion. Controlled means your pet is not jumping or leaping into the pool. Walk your dog into the water until they are deep enough to swim. A life vest can also provide added support while they are building muscle. Do not throw balls or toys! This can cause over extension of the legs. Do not over extend your pet. Start with 5 minute swim sessions and increase duration/frequency gradually.

Long Term Lifestyle

The prognosis for dogs with a TPLO to correct a ruptured cranial cruciate ligament is good to excellent. The majority of dogs return to normal gait, level of activity, and endurance. Following the recovery period, there are no recommended limitations to their lifestyle. It is very common for both knees to develop this ligament injury. Prevention is difficult; the most effective thing you can do towards prevention is to maintain a normal to lean weight and body condition.

We are here to support you and answer any question you may have. Do not hesitate to contact us.