

Post-operative Physical Rehabilitation for Cranial Cruciate Injuries

This guide has suggested dates for you to advance with your pet's rehabilitation. Every pet heals at his or her own pace. The dates are approximate and may change according to the individual case, they are just a guideline. Progress will be assessed and discussed at recheck but please call if you have questions or concerns at any time in between.

Pain management plays a key role in physical rehabilitation. At no time should your pet be permitted to experience unrelenting discomfort. A non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug has been dispensed for the immediate 2-week post-op period. If you find after two to three weeks that your pet still requires pain relievers, please call the hospital to discuss additional medications. While on the pain medications, give the medicine approximately 1 hour before rehabilitation to provide pain relief during your pet's exercises.

During weeks 1 to 3 it is best to perform the massage, range of motion exercises, and walks right after the hot packing. Using a hot pack increases the compliance of the joint capsule, tendons and scar tissue, increases local tissue metabolism, and reduces joint stiffness, thereby countering much of the stimulus for pain. A hot pack is the pack provided by us, or damp hand towel that has been micro waved to temperatures between 104°- 113° F. Do not use an electric heating pad.

Massage increases blood flow, stretches and breaks down adhesions, provides muscle relaxation, and produces analgesia. It does not affect muscle mass, strength or rate of atrophy. When massaging your pet's quadriceps (the large muscle group on the front of the thigh), do so with an even rhythm. Vary the pressure of kneading and squeezing, beginning with light pressure and proceeding to moderate pressure.

Passive range of motion exercise is commonly used whenever a patient has a lack of motor control or is unwilling to use a limb because of pain. It requires no effort on the part of the pet. It is intended to maintain the normal range of motion in joints, improve blood and lymphatic circulation, and stimulate sensory awareness. Move the entire limb through a range of motion similar to that of walking at least 10 times.

Active exercise improves muscular strength, endurance and coordination while it reduces joint stiffness and muscle atrophy. Active exercises include slow and eventually faster leash walks, sit-stand exercises, figure-of-eight walks, incline walks and swimming. When swimming, if possible, carefully lower or walk your pet into and out of the water. Never encourage him and her to leap in or out.

Post-discharge for 3 days (days ____ / ____ to ____ / ____)

1. Apply ice to the stifle (knee) joint for 15 minutes three times a day.
2. There are no exercises during these days; leash walking to do business only is okay.

Week 1 (days ____ / ____ to ____ / ____)

1. Apply a hot pack to the stifle for 10 to 15 minutes two to three times a day.
2. Precede and follow passive range of motion exercises with massage of the quadriceps muscles for 10 to 20 minutes.

3. Perform passive range of motion exercises – 10 slow repetitions three times a day.
4. Begin *slow* leash walks of 10 minutes or less three times a day.

Week 2 & 3 (days ____ / ____ to ____ / ____)

A recheck with suture removal should be scheduled at 2 weeks post-op (____ / ____)

1. Apply a hot pack to the stifle for 10-15 minutes two to three times a day.
2. Precede and follow passive range of motion exercises with massage of the quadriceps muscles for 10-20 minutes.
3. Perform passive range of motion exercises – 10 slow repetitions three times a day.
4. Increase the *slow* leash walks to 10-20 minutes three times a day.

Weeks 4 & 5 (days ____ / ____ to ____ / ____)

A recheck should be scheduled at 4 weeks post-op (____ / ____)

1. Increase the *slow* leash walks to 20-30 minutes two or three times a day.
2. Have the pet perform 10 repetitions of sit-stand exercises with the pet keeping the affected knee against a wall (to encourage complete flexion of the stifle) three times a day.
3. Have the pet perform 10-15 repetitions of figure of eight walks, circling to the right and left.
4. If possible, initiate swimming exercises for 1-3 minutes twice a day.

Weeks 6 & 8 (days ____ / ____ to ____ / ____)

A recheck should be scheduled at 8 weeks post-op (____ / ____)

1. Take the pet on leash walks for 30-40 minutes once a day slow enough to ensure that the pet is weight bearing on the affected limb.
2. Take the pet on incline walks on hills or ramps for 5-10 minutes once or twice a day.
3. Have the pet go up a flight of stairs 5-10 minutes once or twice a day.
4. If possible, have the pet swim.

Weeks 9-12 (days ____ / ____ to ____ / ____)

1. Take the pet on faster 30-40 minute walks once or twice a day.
2. Take the pet for a run – straight only, no turns – for 10-15 minutes twice a day.

A last recheck should be scheduled at 12 weeks post-op (____ / ____) to assess your pet's progress. With the exception of those patients who have also had a meniscus (cartilage cushion) removed from joint, the healing should be complete with return to full activity.