

Inver Grove Heights Animal Hospital

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Physical Therapy Following Stifle Surgery

1. Immediately post-op:
 - Administer all medications as directed by the veterinarian
2. The day following surgery (if *not* bandaged):
 - Massage the quadriceps for a few minutes then perform passive range of motion exercises: flex the stifle (knee) and hock (ankle) joint, then extend these joints slowly for 10 repetitions three times per day. Continue these exercises until your dog is using the leg well.
 - Start *slow* leash walks for 5-10 minutes two times a day. The slower pace of ambulation should encourage your dog to place the limb on the ground. ***Until the leg is entirely healed, always have a sling in place so that you can stabilize your dog should it begin to slip or fall. This is for the safety of your dog and to protect the surgical site from breakdown. Do not, however, use the sling to continuously bear all your dogs weight. It is necessary for your dog to use its muscles for proper recovery.***
3. Starting week two:
 - Increase the slow leash walks to 10 minutes twice daily. (Don't forget the sling)
 - Start slow walks up inclines such as a ramp or hill. Again, the slower the pace the more likely the leg will be used.
 - Continue the massage.
4. Starting week three:
 - Begin faster leash walks so that your dog's gait is equal to a slow trot. (Don't forget the sling) If the operated leg is held up in the air and not used during these fast walks, slow down the pace until the leg is placed consistently on the ground. Limit these sessions to 5 minutes once a day in addition to the slow walks of 15 minutes two times daily.
 - Increase the speed and length of the incline walks ensuring proper use of the operated leg.
5. Starting week four:
 - Increase the slow leash walks to 20 minutes two times a day. (Still with sling present)
 - Have your dog perform 10 repetitions of sit-to-stand exercises three times per day. This can be more effective if your dog sits against a wall with the operated limb next to the wall.
 - Add figure-eight walks, 10 repetitions circling to the right and then to the left, once daily.
6. Starting week five:
 - Increase leash walks to 30 minutes once daily.
 - Have your dog go up a flight of stairs (continue to have sling in place) slowly 5-10 times twice a day.
 - Consider adding swimming exercises for 1-3 minutes twice a day.
7. Weeks 9-12:
 - At this point your dog's surgical site should be nearly healed.
 - A return to full activity is the goal by the end of 12 weeks.
 - Increase the pace of your leash walks with 30-40 minute walks once or twice a day.
 - Take you dog for a run – straight only, no turns – for 10-15 minutes once daily.
 - Begin playing ball under controlled conditions

If at any time in the physical therapy schedule you have questions, problems, or concerns, please call us.