



Discharge instructions for Repair of Patella Luxation

1. Exercise restrictions

First 3 weeks: carry outside if your pet is small or if he/she is larger roll up a towel and place it in front of his/her hind legs to act as a safety sling in case your pet slips. After 5-7 days, you can generally stop using the towel. When inside, your pet should be under your direct control – i.e. on a leash or in your arms – no running to the door, jumping up and down from furniture, etc. When you are not home, your pet should be confined in a small room such as a laundry room.

Next 6 weeks (weeks 4-9): leash walk to urinate and defecate. At 4 weeks after surgery your pet should be able to tolerate 5 minute leash walks 1-2 times a day, and at about 8-9 weeks 10-20 minute leash walks and controlled swimming (if available). There should still be NO off leash/unrestricted activity. In the house, your pet may be free to walk and roam about provided your pet is not rambunctious.

Next 3 weeks (weeks 10-12): you may gradually increase the off leash activities your pet engages in, but do not allow extreme athletic activity until after 12 weeks have passed (Frisbee jumping, rough play with other dogs, etc) Swimming as much as desired is great. During weeks 11 and 12, light play is encouraged for 10-15 minutes twice a day – on a long leash, encourage your dog to gently romp and play, using toys to encourage pulling and tugging. You may gradually increase the amount of this activity over weeks 12-16 during which time healing should be complete and your pet can return to full activity.

*** Walk your pet SLOWLY when leash walking thereby encouraging him/her to bare weight on the affected leg. If you walk too fast, they will merely skip along while holding the affected leg up.

2. Following surgery, Some swelling of the wound is normal, as is some bruising which can be very dark red. Often as healing progresses, the swelling can move down the leg to the ankle and the bruising can spread out. You should become concerned that your pet may have an infection IF:

A: the wound becomes very swollen or discharges a yellow or green material

B: your dog suddenly stops using the leg or becomes very depressed or lethargic. If these signs occur, you should contact your veterinarian

Sometimes the wound will ooze some blood during the first 24-48 hours at home. You should not be alarmed at this; you can hold a cotton sponge over it for 5-10 minutes to stop the bleeding.

You may also notice some swelling at the point of the knee, and you may be able to feel small pins at this site. This is normal, since in some cases pins are used to re-align the knee cap, they are usually not removed unless they cause lameness and pain or migrate through the skin.

3. What is a normal postoperative course?

For the first 2-4 weeks your pet will probably hold the leg up most of the time and then start to place it and then progressively improve. Small breed dogs such as yorkies, poodles etc. will often hold the leg up for longer (ie 3-4 weeks). If you are concerned that your pet is not improving well enough, please call your veterinarian for advice. It may take several days before your pet has a bowel movement, this is normal, since anesthesia can slow intestinal movement.

4. Physical Therapy

If there is no bandage present after surgery, you may apply cold compresses to the knee area for about 10 minutes 2-3 times a day for the first 2 days after surgery. You may also begin to perform passive range of motion (ROM) exercises by GENTLY flexing and extending the joints of the affected leg. In small dogs, this is easily done while cradling your pet in your arms while gently pushing the foot forward followed by cupping a hand over the knee and gently pulling backward. In larger dogs, this is most easily accomplished while they are lying on their side with the affected limb up.

ROM Exercise--Have your pet lie on his/her 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 knee and then slowly pull the foot and push the thigh down and back into extension of the knee. Concentrate on the extension movement. Flex and extend only to your pet's comfort limit. Do not go to the point of creating pain or resentment. Following ROM, apply ice packs to the surgical site for 10 minutes

After 3 days, warm compresses may be used as described above, and may be most beneficial just prior to leash walking or ROM exercise. ROM Exercise should be done twice daily for a minimum of 10 repetitions the first 3 weeks. Hold for 5 seconds at the peak of flexion and extension.

Weeks 4-9: Add Sit/stand Exercise (for dogs)—Have your pet repeatedly sit and stand for 10 repetitions twice daily. Use small treats to encourage participation. Do not push down on his/her rump. Continue ROM exercise.

Controlled Swimming (can begin weeks 8 or 9): controlled swimming means your dog gently walks into the water until depth is sufficient to swim. It is not recommended to throw a ball or encourage any behavior which may result in

your pet jumping into the water or lunging suddenly, or slipping on a slick surface (pool deck, bathtub). No more than 5 minutes of swimming initially – build gradually.

Long term lifestyle:

Following the 12-16 week recovery period, there are no recommended limitations to their lifestyle. A gradual return to full function should occur, to allow for a smooth transition back to normal activity. If stiffness and lameness develop over time, intermittent use of anti-inflammatory medications can help to improve limb function. Occasionally the implants that were placed in your dog's knee will cause irritation and lameness. If necessary, these are easily removed once healing is complete. Remember, surgery was performed to correct the existing abnormal anatomy, prevent further injury to the knee, and to slow the progression of arthritic change – but the arthritis cannot be cured surgically.

Stephen J. Van Lue, DVM, DACVS
svanlue@vanluevetsurg.com