

The following instructions are intended to provide you with a guideline to the correct amount of exercise you can allow your pet. Please bear in mind these guidelines may need to be adapted for each individual patient.

A gradual improvement in use of the leg over time should be seen. Any sudden increase in lameness that persists for more than 24 hours is an indication for rest and prompt re-examination.

#### Week 0-1 - Strict rest

Room rest with short trips out on the lead only for toileting

#### Weeks 1-2 - Minimal exercise

House rest with frequent short lead walks of a few minutes on flat ground. Walk at a slow pace to encourage use of the leg

#### Week 2 - Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy

Can be commenced at this stage if required

#### Weeks 2-6 - Controlled lead exercise

Short lead walks on flat ground. Maximum of 10 to 15 minutes duration only but several times daily

#### Weeks 6-14 - Increasing controlled exercise

Controlled lead walks on flat ground several times daily. Increase length by 5 minutes per week up to 45 minutes.

Increase pace of walking and start varying terrain. Decrease frequency of walks as length increases

#### Weeks 14-18 - Controlled exercise with increasing off lead activity

Long lead walk followed by 5 minutes off lead activity at the end.

Increase off lead activity by 5 minutes per week.

No playing with other dogs, jumping or ball chasing activities

#### Weeks 18-22 - Controlled off lead activity

Unlimited duration walks and off lead activity but continue to avoid strenuous activities/jumping/playing

## Summary

- The long term prognosis following cruciate surgery is usually good with most dogs being able to return to a reasonable level of activity.
- Knee joint arthritis is unfortunately inevitable, even when surgery has been performed, and this can require long term management in some patients.
- Preventing weight gain during the rehabilitation phase and maintaining a lean body condition long term is a key factor in minimising the effects of arthritis.



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# POST-OPERATIVE CARE FOLLOWING SURGERY FOR MANAGEMENT OF CRANIAL CRUCIATE RUPTURE.



Cruciate ligaments are important structures within the knee joint necessary for joint stability and normal function (figure 1).

Ligament rupture causes knee joint pain and instability which can in turn lead to development of other painful problems such as meniscal (cartilage) damage and arthritis (figure 2).

## Surgical Procedure: Extracapsular suture stabilisation.

Your pet has had surgery to manage rupture of the cranial cruciate ligament.

The surgical procedure involves thorough exploration of the joint to assess for injuries to other joint structures, especially the meniscal cartilages. Damaged meniscal cartilage needs to be removed as this can be a cause of on going pain and lameness.

Repair of the ruptured cruciate ligament is not feasible in dogs, so replacement of the ligament with artificial material is performed. A heavy duty material, such as nylon, is implanted across the joint to mimic the function of the cranial cruciate ligament and thereby improving joint stability (figure 3).



**Figure 1:**  
Stifle - normal



**Figure 2:**  
Stifle - cruciate rupture and early degenerative joint disease



**Figure 3:**  
Stifle - cruciate rupture and more advanced osteoarthritis

## Post-operative Care:

The short term priority is to ensure your pet is comfortable and the surgical wound heals without complications:

- The knee will initially be more painful following surgery. Your pet will be prescribed pain relief to keep it comfortable and this should be administered as directed. Comfort levels should gradually improve in the days following surgery
- Licking or self-trauma of the wound can cause infection and prevent normal wound healing. It is imperative this is not allowed and use of an Elizabethan collar may be required
- Some bruising following surgery is normal and should resolve over the following week. Please monitor the wound for any discharge, bleeding, or swelling
- If you have any concerns about the appearance of the wound or your pet's comfort levels please contact your vet for advice
- Please book follow up checks with your vet as directed. This will normally be 3 days and 10 days following the operation and thereafter depending upon progress



## Rehabilitation:

- Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy can play important roles in helping speed recovery. Your vet can advise on physiotherapy techniques to use immediately post surgery such as gentle massage and using cold packs on the knee. More aggressive physiotherapy techniques and hydrotherapy can usually be started 2 weeks after surgery
- Preventing over activity following cruciate surgery is extremely important. Allowing your pet too much activity too soon can increase the risk of serious complications which could require further surgery to resolve, or, even alter the long term success of the surgery

It is important to appreciate that, although the implanted materials used for the procedure are very strong, they will not last indefinitely and will gradually weaken over time. Careful post-operative care is required to reduce the risk of the implant failing before full recovery has been reached. Activity levels therefore must be carefully controlled.

