FEMORAL FRACTURE SURGERY IN A PUPPY:
AT HOME CARE

Your pet has had surgery for the treatment of a fractured femur. The femur has been put back together with a stainless steel plate and several screws and a pin down the middle. The objective of the operation is to stabilise the fracture until it heals. This will take between 3 and 6 weeks. Implant removal is generally not necessary.
Most dogs will be putting some weight on the leg within ten days post-surgery. There should be a progressive increase in weight-bearing over the following weeks. There are a range of potential complications to any surgery, so if you notice something that you’re unsure about, please contact us to discuss it.

Re-examination
Re-examination is advised in 4 days (sooner if you are concerned) to:
- Remove the dressing
- Remove the fentanyl patch
- Examine the wound.
There is often some bruising and swelling around the surgery site; this is normal and should resolve uneventfully. Please make an appointment to drop your pet off for a day stay for follow-up x-rays in about 4 weeks; we will assess the degree of recovery and discuss the rehabilitation exercise program then.

Medications
- Anti-inflamatory: ____________
Packet label instructions should be followed.
- Analgesic patch (fentanyl). This will be removed at the 4 day recheck.

Post-operative exercise
Strict rest (no free exercise allowed) for the next 6 weeks is necessary to allow healing of the fracture, even if your pet feels capable of more activity – any early overuse of the limb can result in failure of the surgery, which in some cases necessitates revision surgery. This means your pet should be confined to a small room or run for the duration of this period. For small dogs and cats, a crate is ideal. The only exercise allowed is short-duration (10 minutes maximum), slow walks on a leash in the back yard for toileting purposes. This includes no jumping (including into and out of cars) and definitely no stairs! Please try to keep your pet on flat surfaces only, and preferably not on slippery surfaces e.g. tiles and polished floors. If this is unavoidable, then consider putting rugs down or non-slip matting (which can be purchased by hardware stores). An old towel can be used as a hind-quarter sling if it is placed underneath the abdomen. By doing this you can provide support and security in the early post-operative period.
During the rehabilitation period, daily food intake should be reduced by approximately one-third to prevent your pet putting on more weight while not exercising.

Physiotherapy
After the first 2 days postoperatively, physiotherapy in the form of passive range-of-motion exercises can be performed. Ideally, all joints of the affected limb should receive physiotherapy 2 to 3 times a day. During each session, a minimum of 10 flexions and extensions should be performed on each joint. After flexion and extension of the individual joints, the entire limb should be cycled through its full, pain-free range-of-motion 10 times, as if your pet were riding a bicycle. It is very important never to force the joints or cause pain, but gently manoeuvre the limb through a range-of-motion that is well tolerated.

Longer-term follow-up and care
Sit-to-stand exercises should also begin around 3 weeks post-operatively. This can be achieved during leash walking when the patient is commanded to “sit” and just before assuming
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In the sitting position, the command to "walk-on" is given. This routine is repeated 10 or more times every walk and has the effect of building the quadriceps muscle mass, which is very important in rehabilitation following fracture surgery. There should be no unsupervised exercise, and running and jumping should be avoided during the 6-week post-operative period. At around 4 weeks post-operatively, a radiograph of the stifle should be taken to assess the progress of healing. Everything going well, controlled exercise on a leash may begin at this time. Leash walks should be minimal at first (10 minutes twice daily), and then gradually increased after 4 weeks post-operatively. Free exercise off the lead is not advised until after the rehabilitation program has finished.

There is a large variation in how quickly individuals return to full function following fracture surgery. If there is not near normal activity by 12 to 16 weeks post-operatively, then please make an appointment for reassessment.

Prognosis
Your pet has a good chance of improvement in lameness. Most patients make an excellent recovery within one to three months of surgery. It is most important not to allow your pet to become overweight and to maintain a reasonable level of fitness. If you have any questions or concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact us.

Please care for your pet as directed and please return to see us any time during your pet’s recovery if you are at all concerned about the wound healing.