

# CONSERVATIVE CARE FOR SPINAL DISEASE

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## SUMMARY:

- 1) Strict crate rest at all times for the next 4 weeks
- 2) Recheck with your doctor in 2 weeks
- 3) Give medication as directed
- 4) If your pet cannot stand, is in severe pain despite medications or has not urinated in over 24 hours seek emergency veterinary care.

## EXPLANATION:

Your dog is suspected to have a problem in the spine. Very often these symptoms are caused by intervertebral disc disease or a "slipped disc". Without further diagnostics we cannot be 100% sure that your pet has a slipped disc. Occasionally a spinal problem is caused by something else. For instance conditions like spinal cord tumors, infections and fluid pockets within the spine can cause identical symptoms to a slipped disc. These conditions require advanced diagnostics, such as myelograms, MRIs or CT scans to diagnose.

At this stage, we have decided to pursue conservative treatment. This treatment includes rest and medications. Conservative treatment can be very successful, especially in animals with mild symptoms. However, the success of this treatment depends on you being strict!

The single most important part of conservative management is crate rest. This means your pet needs to be confined to a small crate. This crate should be just large enough for your dog to stand up comfortably and turn around. They should be in this crate at ALL TIMES except for three short 10 minute leash walks. These walks MUST be performed on a leash. If your pet has neck pain, they should wear a harness (rather than a neck collar) and all walks should be done with the leash attached to the harness.

If your pet is small enough, you may hold them while you are doing activities like reading or watching TV. You must have direct physical control over them at all times. If you need to get up- even for just a second- you MUST put them back in the crate first. Unfortunately many pets will get much worse after doing something like jumping off a couch or bed. It only takes a split second for them to really hurt themselves. Be careful!

Medications will help your pet be calmer and more comfortable, but they will not fix the problem. Rest and time are what help your pet heal. Strict rest can be VERY difficult to enforce, but remember you are doing this for them. Think of it as tough love.

Full recovery of a presumed slipped disc takes a minimum of 4 weeks of strict rest, followed by a period of gradual return to activity. It's important to finish the whole treatment, even though your pet may feel better much sooner. Stopping treatment too early is a common cause of relapses.



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Unfortunately conservative management is not right for every pet. If your pet is getting worse seek urgent veterinary advice. If your pet is experiencing any of the following please seek emergency veterinary advice:

- 1) Moderate to severe pain despite medication
- 2) Unable to stand/walk even for a step
- 3) Have not urinated in over 24 hours

If your pet is not improving over the course of several weeks, or you feel at any point they are starting to get worse, contact your veterinarian for advice.

