

Return to Activity After a Period of Rest

by Dr. Carrie Journey DVM, DACVIM (Neurology)

SUMMARY:

1. Slowly return your dog to activity over a 4 week period.
2. If they seem tired or painful, return to the previous level of activity and contact your vet.
3. High impact activity will always have some risk for spinal patients.

EXPLANATION:

Congratulations on making it through crate rest!

It's great that your dog feels better, but we don't want to let them do too much too soon. Overactivity can cause a relapse, so it is important to go slow.

Most dogs complete this schedule in four weeks. However, if you are nervous or you feel like your dog needs more time to rest, you can go slower. Do not go faster than the recommended regimen unless instructed to do so by your veterinarian.

Week 1: Slowly increase the length of each walk by five minutes. For example if you were doing ten minute walks, on the first walk go for a fifteen minute walk, then next walk a twenty minute walk and so on. If your pet seems exhausted, it's okay to cut the walks short. Our goal is to get a good workout, not overdo it.

Week 2: Continue leash walks outside. When you are home and able to supervise your pet, they can start to have some time out of the crate. At this stage discourage any rough-housing and very active play.

Week 3: Start to let your pet have some time out of the crate unsupervised. Start with short periods of time. For instance, leave your pet out of the crate while you run to the store, or while you are busy in another room. Slowly increase the amount of time your pet is unsupervised. Continue longer walks for exercise.

Week 4: Slowly introduce more active play. Start slowly and build up to high impact activity. For instance, if your dog likes to play fetch: Start by rolling a ball along the floor a few times the first day. Then gently toss the ball a short distance the next day. Then toss the ball further the next day. Gradually build up the intensity and duration.

Tips and tricks:

1. Things like car ramps and furniture stairs can be a big help in keeping your pet's spine healthy.
2. Dogs who have had neck pain should always be leashed with a harness rather than a neck collar.



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3. If your pet is really high energy and you are worried they are going to overdo it, focus on low impact exercise. Wearing them out with a long leash walk will keep them from going too crazy and overdoing it when they are out of the crate.
4. Tug of war is not a good game to play with dogs who have had neck pain. Try to redirect to a new game like fetch.
5. High impact activity will always be a little risky for a dog with previous spinal problems. However, we have to balance caution with quality of life.
6. Unfortunately up to 50% of dogs with a previous back problem will have another problem in their life. If you think your dog has a relapse, start rest and get an appointment with your veterinarian ASAP.

