

# Post Operative Instructions for Spine Surgery

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## **SUMMARY:**

- 1) Strict crate rest is an important part of healing.
- 2) Give medications as directed.
- 3) Monitor incision daily- contact the hospital if there are any signs of redness, swelling or discharge.
- 4) Perform physical therapy twice daily
- 5) Recheck in two weeks time.

## **SURGERY & LOCATION:**

### **EXPLANATION:**

Your pet is recovering from spinal surgery. Full recovery from the injury and following surgery takes time-often months- be patient with yourself and your pet.

### **RECHECK:**

Please recheck with a veterinarian in two weeks time. At this time we will check on your pets progress, and any staples or sutures will be removed.

### **INCISION CHECK:**

Please check your pets incision daily. If there is any redness, swelling or discharge, please contact the hospital for advice.

Depending on the incision location, a e-collar may have been provided. It is very important to keep your pet from licking or scratching at the incision, as this is the number one source of infections.

Your pet should not be bathed until the sutures/staples come out in 10 to 14 days.

### **CRATE REST:**

Your pet should be placed in a crate that is just large enough for them to stand up, turn around and have a bowl of water. There should be in this enclosure at ALL TIMES. The only time they should be out of the enclosure is when you have direct physical control of them- for instance you are holding them or they are on leash. If you need to walk away from them, even for a minute, they must be in their crate.

Some pets will not tolerate confinement in a crate. If your pet does not acclimate in a few days, you may try an open topped enclosure, like a playpen or x-pen, or confinement in a small bathroom.



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## **PHYSICAL THERAPY:**

### **Range of motion:**

Passive range of motion exercises help keep your pets joints comfortable and flexible. Physical therapy should be performed a few times a day.

To perform range of motion exercises, start with a gentle massage. Rub your pets leg from the tip of their toes to the top of the leg. Then starting with the toes gently flex and extend each joint in the leg 10 times. You want to take the joint to the normal comfortable extent of where it can go. Think of it as a gentle stretch. After you have done all the joints- toes, ankles, knee and hip in the back and toes, wrist, elbow and shoulder in the front, take each leg in a gentle bicycling motion for 10 repetitions. Repeat for each leg.

Remember, physical therapy should not be painful. Try to make this a positive experience for your pet. Talk to them, use a gentle touch and give them treats during.

**Sling walks:** Place a sling or a rolled towel under your pet's belly just in front of their back legs. Hold this sling in your right hand, and the leash in your left hand. Guide your pet on a short walk. It's important that they go slow to help the focus on moving their back legs and on foot placement. Do this for five to 10 minutes twice a day.

**Referral for Physical Rehabilitation:** If you would like to have an appointment with a certified pet rehabilitation therapist, please let us know so that we can refer you. Many pets will recover with just these provided exercises and time. However, some pets, especially those with significant injuries or delayed recoveries, will benefit from a more intense and supervised exercise program.

### **ASSISTIVE DEVICES:**

Your pet may have been provided with a sling to assist in walking. If not, you can purchase one at many major pet stores as well as online at websites like [www.handicappedpets.com](http://www.handicappedpets.com). This site also has a wide variety of boots and other helpful tools like ramps and furniture steps that may be helpful later on in your pet's recovery.

If your pet has trouble walking in their front legs, you may want to purchase a whole body harness such as the ones that are available at [www.helpemup.com](http://www.helpemup.com).

### **BLADDER CARE:**

Pets with spinal injuries commonly get bladder infections. Please monitor for any change in the color or smell in your pet's urine and contact the hospital if you have concerns.

Some pets will need help urinating after a spinal injury. If your pet is one of these patients, we will also provide you with a handout on bladder expression. It is very important that your pet urinates at least once every 24 hours. If your pet has not urinated in over 24 hours or if they are constantly dribbling urine, please contact the hospital urgently.



**MONITORING:**

Please schedule a recheck appointment two weeks after surgery.

Please monitor for the following and call the hospital if you have concerns:

- 1) Discomfort that is not controlled by medications
- 2) No urination in over 24 hours
- 3) Redness, swelling or discharge from the incision
- 4) Worsening of your pet's ability to move.

