



Referral Animal Hospital, P.A.

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## **Femoral Head and Neck Excision**

Your pet had surgery to relieve a significant amount of pain associated with its hip problem. You can generally anticipate an 80-90% return to normal function in the operated leg following this type of surgery. The ultimate outcome will be determined by many factors, such as the type of disease that made the surgery necessary, the age and size of your pet, the amount of effort you place in rehabilitation, whether or not your pet builds a good scar tissue pad in the area of the socket, and your pet's pain threshold. Generally speaking, small animals (less than 60 pounds) regain better leg function than do larger animals, and younger animals rehabilitate better than do older animals. Importantly, animals that undergo an active rehabilitation program fare better than those that do not. The following is an attempt to outline an average rehabilitation program for your pet following surgical removal of the "ball" of the hip joint.

**Surgery through 2 Weeks:** Your pet needs some tender loving care only. No exercise is indicated although you may gently move your pet's leg through a normal range of motion for **5 minutes twice daily**. We need to give the operative site time to heal. Pain medication and tranquilization may be needed.

**Weeks 3 through 4:** Leash activity is appropriate. You should walk your pet on a short, tight leash at a pace that is compatible with your pets using the leg. At first this will be very slow, but the pace will quicken soon enough. Again, passive range of motion exercises are appropriate, but to be of value they must be performed for 10 minutes, twice daily and you must extend and flex the hip just until it begins to hurt your pet a little--then you know that you are increasing the range of motion in the hip area and benefiting your pet. Massage therapy, heat therapy, and water massage are beneficial as well.

**Weeks 5 through 8:** As your pet becomes more willing to use the leg, you should begin demanding more. Walks uphill, upstairs, in deep sand at the beach, sit-stand exercises, swimming, standing on the hind legs, etc. are good muscle-building activities. These activities place stress on the hind legs, forcing your pet to use them more, and thus strengthening the muscles and new scar tissue that is forming in the area where the ball of the hip joint used to be.

**Weeks 8 through 12:** Light ball playing is fine, as it requires rapid starts from a stationary position. Athletes may be jogging, jumping, pulling sleds, etc. Playtime with other pets is beneficial. Any activity that forces your pet to use the rear legs is appropriate.

It will, on the average, take a minimum of 12 weeks for your pet to use the operated leg well. During this period of rehabilitation it is not unusual for your pet to strain it's muscles or stretch the scar tissue that has newly formed in the operative site, causing lameness. This lameness is typically rapid in onset and gradually gets better over 3-5 days time. Treatment with aspirin or other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (e.g. Rimadyl, EtoGesic, etc.) is appropriate during these episodes. **Be sure to contact your veterinarian to ensure that your pet will be receiving the proper dose prior to giving any medication!!** If your pet does not seem to be rehabilitating normally, or if you have concerns, you should reschedule an appointment so that we may see your pet and determine exactly what is wrong and take the proper steps to correct the problem.

If you have any questions or problems during your pet's rehabilitation, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are available to answer questions during regular office hours as well as evenings and weekends via our voice mail system. Please leave a message and a member of our staff will return your call as soon as possible. Thank you for trusting us with the care of your pet.