



Referral Animal Hospital, P.A.

**DAVID T. CROUCH, DVM**  
DIPLOMATE, AMERICAN COLLEGE OF VETERINARY SURGEONS

## **POST SURGICAL CARE OF ARTHROSCOPY PATIENTS**

1. The patient should be confined the first 6-8 weeks following surgery. Three activities are allowed. 1) The patient can be in the house under the immediate care and control of the owner on a carpeted surface without playing. 2) The patient is to be left in a traveling kennel while unattended. 3) The third option is for the patient to be resting outside on a short leash while under the direct supervision of the owner. No prolonged walks are allowed. These restrictions are imposed during the bone healing process to reach the anticipated surgical results. **No free activities are allowed until after healing has occurred and is confirmed by examination (usually 6-8 weeks).**
2. During the 6-8 week confinement period it is recommended that the patient be kept on one-half (½) of their normal portion of food to prevent weight gain.
3. Inflammation and swelling are usually the worst for the first 2-3 days following surgery. Cold therapy may be applied to the joint to relieve pain and reduce the swelling. Ice packs (a bag of frozen vegetables, wrapped in a towel) should be applied alternating 15 minutes on and 10 minutes off for two applications. Repeat this 2-3 times per day. Once the surgical swelling is gone (48-72 hours), heat therapy can be started. First, apply moist heat to the joint with a commercial heat pack or moistened warm towel (hold the warm pack to the inside of your elbow to ensure it is not too hot). The warm pack should be placed on joint for 10 minutes. Afterward, remove the warm pack and begin flexion and extension movements of the joint, starting with small movements and gradually increasing to the limit of comfort over a period of 1 to 2 minutes. At the limit of comfort the joint should be held in position for 10 seconds. The exercises should be repeated five times two to three times a day. If your pet is discharged from the hospital with any medications such as antibiotics and / or anti-inflammatories complete the entire prescription and the recommended dosage. Also, a high-quality glucosamine/chondroitin can be used for additional anti-inflammatory effects to promote the healing of cartilage lesions. If there is a time when the patient is acutely sore or hurts, please contact the WCVS office or your regular veterinarian. Sharp yelps or cries and change in usage of the limb are indications of potential problems.



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4. Discourage the patient from licking at their incisions or bandages. Licking leads to chewing, and the patient may remove skin sutures or staples by doing so, which may lead to infection. An Elizabethan collar may be required to prevent self-manipulation. Bandages and casts should always be kept clean and dry. Any unusual odors, drainage, or persistent licking and chewing are indications of a possible problem. When in doubt, remove the bandage and seek immediate veterinary assistance.
5. An appointment 2 weeks post-operatively is required to remove skin staples or sutures and to monitor soft tissue healing. Your regular veterinarian may perform this. A recheck examination at the WCVS office 6-8 weeks post-operatively to confirm satisfactory healing and progress is required. After skin sutures / staples are removed and satisfactory external soft tissue healing has occurred, the rehabilitation process as outlined is initiated. If at any time during the healing and rehabilitation process you have any questions or concerns about your pet's progress, please give us a call.