Post-operative care for patients after patella luxation surgery

The patella (knee-cap) can luxate (dislocate) out of the groove that it runs in on the femur (thigh bone). The patella is linked to the tibia (shin bone) by the patella tendon. Patella luxation is usually seen in one or both legs as a breed related “anatomical error”. Patella luxation is commonest in smaller breeds of dog like Yorkies or Cavalier King Charles spaniels and in these the patella almost always luxates medially (inwards). Patella luxation can occur in larger breeds of dogs. Here, medial luxation is still commonest, but luxation laterally (outwards) can occur. Cats can get patella luxation. We improve patella alignment with the groove by moving the piece of bone where the patella tendon inserts. The relocated insertion point is fixed with pins and wire until it has fused in its new location. Occasionally, other bone cutting procedures are required. We often recommend release soft tissue to realign the patella, and sometimes we deepen the groove.

**Medication:**

**Antibiotics:** We usually dispense antibiotics like claviseptin (tablets given twice daily).

**Anti-inflammatories:** We are likely to have dispensed carprofen (tablets given twice daily), or meloxicam (a liquid given once daily). These are given with food. They occasionally cause vomiting or diarrhoea, in which case prompt advice should be sought. There are a number of other excellent anti-inflammatory drugs that your own vet might use including Onsiorn and Previcox.

**Analgesics:** We may have dispensed tramadol (tablets given twice daily) for dogs or buprenorphine (liquid given every 8 hours by mouth) for cats.

**Wounds** must not be interfered with or bathed. An Elizabethan collar can help prevent interference with wounds. The thin white Primipore over the wound should be kept dry to protect the wound until it falls off naturally. Any ooze may be gently blotted from the wound with kitchen towel, but if ooze is seen, advice should be sought.

**Rechecks** a few days after surgery may be with your own vet to save un-necessary travelling or with us if travelling is not an issue. All our post-op check-ups are free of further charge. We would like to see the case back 2-3 weeks post-operatively when we can remove sutures/staples and check that all is going to plan. Please contact us to book an appointment.

**Strict restriction and supervision of activity** is required. When cats or dogs don’t have your UNDIVIDED attention, consider confining them to a cage during the early stages of healing. Preventing jumping is essential. Cages which will fold flat when not in use are readily available from your own vet, from us, or from pet superstores, Argos, many DIY stores or from on-line retailers. For cats, several short periods of supervised walking around the kitchen are allowed each day. For dogs, a lead should be used to restrict activity anywhere outside of the house including the garden. Allow just 5 minutes of lead restricted exercise, three times a day, until you are advised to the contrary. For both species, running/jumping/climbing (into cars, upstairs, onto furniture, onto kitchen work tops etc) should be prevented. Consider using stair gates and ramps, and ensure doors and windows are shut to avoid escapes! Please don’t increase the activity until you are advised to do so.

**Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy**

Encouraging gentle walking is helpful – putting bowls away from your pet’s bed can encourage periodic rising / stretching. We might have advised passive flexion/extension exercises to help maintain flexibility and joint motion. Hydrotherapy can help maintain the range of joint motion and muscle mass. Hydrotherapy is delayed for at least 3-4 weeks until the wound can be immersed. We only recommend hydrotherapy centres that are approved by the Canine Hydrotherapy Association.

**What does the future hold?**

The future is usually bright after surgery. Implants usually don’t need removal. Degenerative joint disease may develop in the future (see separate information sheet). X-rays may be required after 6-8 weeks to confirm healing.

**Complications**

Infection is uncommon, but occasionally occurs. Infection, implant loosening or implant irritation would require removal of any metalwork. There is occasionally the need to perform further surgery if luxation persists. Fracture of the fixed piece of bone is occasionally seen, usually in patients that have been over-active, and this can be a real challenge to repair. Other joint problems like cruciate ligament rupture can exacerbate a pre-existing tendency for patella luxation, and patella luxation may then be addressed at the same time as the cruciate ligament rupture. Cruciate ligament injury is a common stifle problem in dogs and can occur later in dogs that have previously had patella luxation surgery.

For further advice please contact us by phone on 07944 105501 or at mail@wm-referrals.com

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