



Post-operative care after an arthrotomy (+/- implant removal), done as a mobile surgery service by West Midlands Referrals

Your pet has had an arthrotomy procedure, where a joint has been opened. Common reasons for this include:

- Dealing with the occasional meniscal (cartilage) tear that can occur in the stifle (knee) joint in the months following a cranial cruciate ligament rupture surgery.
- Removing a bone fragment from a joint (eg un-united anconeal process in the elbow).
- Removing a damaged section of cartilage (eg osteochondrosis dissecans - OCD – surgery in the shoulder or stifle).

We often take this opportunity to remove some or all of any implants that have been previously placed.

Medication:

Antibiotics:	Antibiotics like claviseptin are usually given for a few days (usually tablets given twice daily).
Anti-inflammatories:	Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs usually start/resume the morning after surgery. These are tablets (eg carprofen, Onsior or Previcox), or liquid (meloxicam). They should be given with food. If vomiting or diarrhoea is noted, stop this medication and seek prompt advice.
Analgesics:	We sometimes dispense tramadol (tablets given twice daily).

Wounds must not be interfered with or bathed. An Elizabethan collar can help prevent interference with wounds. 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 required with your own. Please contact them to book this appointment, and for another 2-3 weeks post-op to remove sutures if needs be, and to check that all is going to plan.

Dressings may be used post-operatively. If there is a thin white Primipore stuck to skin over the wound, this can be left on to protect the wound until it falls off naturally. Dressings should be kept dry at all times. If they do become significantly wet please seek advice promptly.

Activity. Strict restriction and supervision of activity is usually not essential. Prevention of anything more than walking or pottering about is advisable for the first 3-4 weeks. Modest lead walks of say 10 minutes 2-3 times a day are appropriate for dogs. Cages can be considered for pets that are likely to be very active and likely to jump. 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. The restricted activity is to allow the soft tissue around the joint time to heal and organise, but the strict exercise restriction (like that which would be required in the weeks following the placement of metalwork) is usually not required. However please don't increase the activity that is allowed until you are advised to do so, and instructions should be given for further increase in exercise at the routine check up 2-3 weeks post-op.

Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy

Encouraging walking is helpful – putting water/food bowls on the other side of the room from your pet's bed can encourage them to rise and stretch periodically. Passive flexion / extension exercises help maintain flexibility and joint motion. Hydrotherapy can help maintain the range of joint motion and muscle mass but this is delayed until 3-4 weeks post-operatively when the surgical wound can stand immersion. Ask your vet for their recommendation for a hydrotherapy centre in your area.

What does the future hold?

The future is usually bright after orthopaedic surgery. Joints have been involved so degenerative joint disease (DJD), often called "osteoarthritis", may develop in the future. X-rays are occasionally required in the post-operative months, but are usually not required. Your vet will advise you of what, if any, action is required for DJD.

Complications

Infection is uncommon, but it does occasionally happen.

The price that you pay your vet on the day doesn't include further consults, medication, dressings, x-rays or revision surgery. We are available to give advice on the case in the post-operative period, but initial contact should be to your own vet. Consider texting/emailing pictures to them. They will then contact us as required and we'll be pleased to give advice. 20/1/2017