

Post-operative care after an arthrotomy without any other concurrent orthopaedic procedure

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).

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 Onsior 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. 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. We could do this check-up if travelling is not an issue, and all our post-op check-ups are free of charge under our “fixed price” schemes. Please contact us to book an appointment for us to see the case back 2-3 weeks post-operatively when we can remove sutures/staples and check that all is going to plan.

Dressings may be used post-operatively. If there is a thin white Primipore 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 with us 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. We only recommend the use of a hydrotherapy centre that is approved by the Canine Hydrotherapy Association.

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 own vet will advise you of what, if any, action is required for DJD.

Complications

Infection is uncommon, but it does occasionally happen.

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