



Advice from an ACPAT chartered canine physiotherapist:

Post-operative rehabilitation for dogs after TPLO (tibial plateau leveling osteotomy) and TTA (tibial tuberosity advancement).

DAY 1-3

Massage: Gently into soft tissue around stifle joint to relax muscles and help manage swelling.

Follow with ...

Passive range of movement (PROM) exercises: (see pictures below) Repeat x 10 for each of the hip, the stifle and the hock joints.

Ice: 10-15 min following PROM exercises. An unopened bag of frozen peas is ideal for this! Put it back in the freezer afterwards, ready for tomorrow!

DAY 4 – 2 WEEKS

Heat: apply for 10-15 min. Use a hot water bottle wrapped in a towel. Check it on your skin for a minute first!

Massage: as above

PROM exercises: as above

Lead Walking: The surgeon will specify the duration but usually build up gradually to 10 min, 3 times a day.

Ice: 10-15 minutes after each walk.

2-3 WEEKS

If dog has full range of movement of the stifle, there is now no need to continue with PROM exercises.

Stretching exercises:

Full limb extension and protraction (see pictures below).

Hold the stretch for 20 seconds. Repeat 5 times.

Sit to stand exercise: Encourage the dog to sit squarely and to push up from its back legs.

Repeat 1-3 times.

Standing on 1 leg: Support dog under stomach and carefully lift up the “good” hind leg so that the dog balances on the weak leg. Repeat 2-5 times.

Lead walking: Progress to 10-15 minutes lead walking, 3 times a day

3-6 WEEKS (3-4 WEEKS for TTA)

Continue with above exercises. Progress standing on 1 leg to unsupported.

Hind leg balance: (see pictures below). Place hind legs on unstable surface. Encourage weight transfer side to side, can either nudge dog at hips, or use a treat to encourage looking up/down, side to side. Repeat for 30 seconds.

Lead walking: Progress to 15-30 minutes, 3 times a day.

6-8 WEEKS (5-6 WEEKS for TTA)

Start hydrotherapy.

Steps and Inclines: Slow walks up and down inclines and steps for 1-3 minutes.

Tug of war: encourage dog to pull back against a toy for few seconds.

Dancing on hind legs: (see pictures below) Lift up the dog’s front legs fully. Repeat 2-10 times.

During Week 6 just standing on hind legs in this position. Progress to taking a few steps in this position.

Caveletti Poles: (see pictures below). Slow stepping over 4-5 poles, 2-4 times.

Hind leg balance: Place the hind legs on balance pad/cushion. Progress to lifting up the front legs at the same time, as for the “dancing on hind legs exercise” above. Hold the balance position for 10-30 seconds.

Lead walking: Progress to 30-40 minutes.

9-12 WEEKS (7-8 WEEKS for TTA)

Practice trotting and zig-zagging on a lead, with the aim of allowing free running by week 10-12 (subject to confirmation of bone healing with a follow up X-ray).

If reduced muscle mass is still present, use leg weights (0.5-1 lb) for 2-5 minutes.

Post-op rehabilitation will vary for each dog. Each new exercise should be started with the minimum repetitions. Increase only if there is no apparent pain or swelling. All exercises should be done 2-3 times daily.

Examples of exercises



Passive range of movement exercise:
Flexion and extension of stifle joint

Stretches: Limb protraction and extension.
Can also be done with dog lying on its side.
Take care not to push on the stifle joint.



Sit to stand exercise: You may need to assist the dog to sit squarely and to stand, pushing from its hind legs. If the dog is initially unable to sit fully then you can let them sit into your hands.

Standing on one leg: Initially support the dog under the tummy to help it balance, and then gradually progress weight bearing through operated leg.



Hind limb balance: You can use a “wobble board”, a balance cushion, a normal cushion, an air bed or a mattress.



Dancing on hind legs:
You may need to use something to lean on initially.
Progress to stepping and standing on hind legs on a balance cushion.



Cavelletti Poles. To encourage limb flexion and weight-bearing. The height of the poles will obviously depend on the size of the dog!