

Post-operative care for patients after femoral head and neck excision

Femoral head and neck excision involves removing the ball of the ball and socket joint of the hip. The joint is then replaced by fibrous tissue. Keeping this fibrous union flexible in the early post-operative period is key to success. Femoral head and neck excision is typically performed for patients with certain fractures or dislocations of the hip, for degenerative or developmental hip disease where other options have been ruled out, and for Leg Perthes disease in young terrier breeds. Half of the success with femoral head and neck excision surgery is down to what we do intra-operatively and the other half is down to the effectiveness of the physiotherapy / hydrotherapy in the first two months post-operatively.

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, Onsiar 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 are likely to have dispensed tramadol (tablets given twice daily) for dogs or buprenorphine (liquid given every 8 hours by mouth) for cats.

The wound must not be interfered with or bathed. We will usually place a Primipore dressing over the wound for the first few days to help protect it. An Elizabethan collar can help prevent interference with wounds. Any ooze may be gently blotted with kitchen towel, but if ooze is seen, advice should be sought.

Rechecks are recommended around a week post op (where we will start/check you are managing the post-op physiotherapy / passive extension exercises as mentioned below), and at 2-3 weeks and 6-8 weeks post-op. Check-ups with us at Barton under Needwood are free of further charge and only take a few minutes. Check ups at your home practice are chargeable. For rechecks at Barton under Needwood, please contact us to book an appointment. For rechecks at your home practice, please ring your own vets to book these. Where travelling is an issue, and/or for pets that get very anxious at the vets, a simple phone conversation with us and/or a text/email photo of the wound may suffice in lieu of the early check. **There should be significant weight-bearing on the operated leg by a few days post-op. There may be significant bruising evident. There may be significant swelling lower down the leg at this time as inflammation "drops". Swelling and bruising should disappear with a few days.** At the 2-3 week check, sutures may be removed or left to slough.

No strict exercise restriction is required, even in the early stages of healing. It is unlikely that your pet will want to jump or climb in the early post-operative period, but early mobilisation and active limb use is advantageous.

Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy

For both cats and dogs, passive flexion / extension exercises are KEY to maintaining flexibility and range of motion at the fibrous union which develops between the hip and the thigh bones. These are performed for a few minutes, 2-3 times per day. These exercises begin a few days after surgery once the wound is comfortable to allow you to manipulate it without causing un-necessary discomfort. The exercises continue over the following two months. We will demonstrate these exercises to you. They aren't difficult to do but they do require your commitment and perseverance. **Pain relieving medication (NSAIDS and/or opiates) is continued for two months to ensure that physiotherapy can be applied effectively over this period.** Encourage walking; putting water/food bowls away from your pet's bed can encourage periodic rising and stretching. See http://www.wm-referrals.com/case_studies_ortho/femoral-head-and-neck-excision-2/ for images.

For dogs, hydrotherapy is strongly recommended to help maintain the range of joint motion and muscle mass but swimming is delayed until 3-4 weeks post-operatively when the wound can stand immersion. Cats can certainly have hydrotherapy too from this time, but there are fewer of them that will readily tolerate it! Ask your own vet for their recommendation for a hydrotherapy centre in your area.

Follow up radiography is not usually required unless limb use is not progressing as expected in the few weeks post-operatively. Where follow up X-rays are required and done with us, we make no further charges and this can often be done while you wait. Sedation will usually be required.

What does the future hold?

Pets usually walk well on the leg within weeks, and should definitely be walking well by two months. Pain medications should no longer be required at this time. Expect the limb to be "90%" of what it was. There may be stiffness for a few steps when they first get up after prolonged rest, but this should soon wear off once the pet "gets going". As a general rule, the use of the operated leg is better in smaller pets after this surgery in the long term. That having been said, even large breed dogs usually do surprisingly well after this surgery.

Our fixed prices include any follow up consults and x-rays done with us, but don't include further medication or revision surgery. For further details please see www.wm-referrals.com, "about us", "FAQs". Consults, dressings, x-rays and drugs from your usual vet will be chargeable. For further advice please contact us on 07944 105501 or enquiries@wm-referrals.com Consider texting/emailing pictures.