



Post-operative care for dogs after total hip replacement (THR)

THR is a surgery that is used to salvage function when the joint between the pelvis and the thigh bone is severely compromised. This is usually because of hip dysplasia and / or severe degenerative joint disease (DJD, also called “arthritis”) but can be required in selected cases with fractures or dislocations. It is a technically advanced and challenging procedure. Experience is the key to good rates of success and one of our surgeons, Andy Whittingham, has performed well over 200 of these procedures. When complications occur they are often very serious requiring revision surgery with an uncertain outcome. You should accept a 5% possibility of serious complications occurring before deciding to embark on this surgery. **A large amount of time and effort goes into preparing kits and theatre for THRs. We greatly reduce other work on the same day. We incur large costs if cancellation occurs at the last minute. If your dog is ill in any way in the week leading up to the surgery date please ring us straight away so we can reschedule the THR for a later date. Otherwise a late cancellation may incur significant charges for you which would have otherwise been avoidable.**

Medication:

Antibiotics:	Antibiotics like claviseptin are 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 often dispense tramadol (tablets given twice daily).

Immediately post op

Your pet can eat and drink on the evening after surgery. Eating, drinking and urination should have been seen on the morning after surgery, and at least once daily thereafter – if not, please call us without delay. Defaecation sometimes isn’t seen for several days post-op.

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 are recommended at 2-3 weeks and 6-8 weeks post-op. Rechecks at 3-5 days are advised if there are issues. 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 well suffice in lieu of the 3-5 day check. **By 3-5 days there should be significant weight-bearing on the operated leg. There may well be significant bruising evident. There may be swelling lower down the leg at this time as inflammation “drops” down the leg. Swelling and bruising should disappear with a few days.** At the 2-3 week check, sutures may be removed or left to slough.

Dressings. A Primipore is used post-operatively to keep the wound clean and protected. These should be kept dry at all times and remain in situ for a few days. They are left to fall off on their own. If they become wet, seek advice promptly.

Strict restriction and supervision of activity is required for 8 weeks following THR. When your dog doesn’t have your UNDIVIDED attention, you will need to confine them to a cage during the early stages of healing. Jumbo sized cages which will fold flat when not in use are readily available from pet/DIY superstores, Argos or from on-line retailers. 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. Running/jumping/climbing (into cars, upstairs, onto furniture etc) must be prevented. Use stair gates and ramps where necessary.

Physiotherapy and hydrotherapy

Encouraging gentle 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 and swimming are NOT recommended after total hip replacement.**

Follow up radiography, may be needed in the post-operative period. If done with us, there no extra charge. This may only take a few minutes with our hand-held X-ray generator. It is best not to feed your pet beforehand just in case we need to sedate. If X-rays are done at your own vets these will be chargeable and will likely require sedation or anaesthesia.

What does the future hold? What complications are possible?

The future is usually bright after THR. Implants are designed to remain in place for the duration of your pet’s life. The shorter lifespan of dogs means that implants don’t wear out and need replacing, as they sometimes do in people. The joint has been replaced, so DJD is no longer an issue. Dislocation of the components of the artificial hip joint is possible and might require revision surgery. This is less likely if restriction of exercise and activity is adhered to. Infection is uncommon, but does occasionally happen and usually requires removal of metalwork and conversion to a femoral head and neck excision (see separate information sheet). Implant movement, migration, failure or breakage is less common with recent improvements in implants/ technique, but can occur.

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 at enquiries@wm-referrals.com. Consider texting/emailing pictures.