



Home Care: Femoral Head & Neck Osteotomy (FHO)

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Home care after orthopedic surgery is critical to the success of the surgery. Allowing your pet too much activity may alter the anticipated outcome of the surgery. Remember, this surgery is a “salvage” procedure designed to eliminate future arthritis and pain from the damaged or diseased hip joint and although the joint will never be “good as new”, most pets will have pain free function of the leg when walking. Your pet will not have “full range of motion” and may experience a slight limp, but this is due to the “false joint” that forms higher up. Many pets will carry the leg when trotting as a result of the limited range of motion of the new joint. Pets without pre- surgical arthritis tend to heal faster and better than patients with arthritis.



Week 1:

1. Provide pain management prescribed.
2. Need an ice Application? If pain and inflammation is not completely under control. Apply an ice-pack to the hip for 10 to 15 minutes two to four times a day for the first 24 to 36 hours after surgery to help better control pain and inflammation. Using a barrier (e.g. thin towel) is necessary between the ice pack and skin if using a commercial gel pack.
3. Perform passive range of motion exercise (gently flex and extend the hip); 20 to 30 times, slow repetitions three times a day.
4. Begin slow leash walks of less than 10 minutes three times a day even though your pet will probably not be using the leg at this time.

Weeks 2 & 3:

1. Stop passive range of motion exercise if your pet is using the leg correctly.
2. Increase the slow leash walks 10 to 20 minutes three times a day.
3. Most patients begin to “toe touch” when standing by week 2, but every pet is different and some may take longer.

Weeks 4 & 5:

1. Increase the slow leash walks to 20 to 30 minutes two or three times daily.
2. Have your pet perform 10 repetitions of sit-stand exercises

three times a day.

3. Have your pet perform 10 to 15 repetitions of figure-of-eight walks two or three times a day, circling to the right and left.
4. If available, swimming exercises for one to three minutes twice a day is helpful.
6. Most pets will be putting some weight on the leg at this point in time on a slow walk but hold it up on a trot or run.

Weeks 6 - 8:

1. Schedule another recheck with your doctor six weeks after surgery to evaluate your pet’s progress.
2. Take your pet on leash walks for 30 to 40 minutes once a day, slow enough to ensure that your pet is weight bearing on the affected limb.
3. Take your pet on incline walks or hills or ramps for 5 to 10 minutes once or twice a day.
4. Take your pet up a flight of stairs, if available, 5 to 10 times slowly twice a day.
5. Continue swimming if possible.
6. Most pets will be using the leg with a moderate limp at this point in time.

Weeks 9 - 12:

At this point, your pet’s limping should be slowly getting less and less and activity should gradually return to full activity by the end of this period.

After 12 weeks.

1. Take your pet on faster 30 to 40 minute walks once or twice a day.
2. Take your pet for a run-straight only, no turns-for 10 to 15 minutes twice a day.

Additional Instructions:

1. Licking at the incision should be discouraged because it may lead to chewing at the sutures or staples causing a wound infection. It may be necessary to bandage the leg or use an Elizabethan collar to prevent licking.
2. Feed your pet its regular diet but reduce it by 10% to allow for reduced activity.
3. Mild swelling may occur near incision or low on limbs. Your veterinarian should check moderate or severe swelling immediately.

Complications

1. Delayed healing: If your pet does not improve after four weeks and the leg use is not satisfactory, physical therapy with a trained veterinary physical therapist can be very rewarding.
2. Some pets will have some contact between the end of the femur and the pelvis entrapping muscles between them and causing pain which can usually be treated with anti-inflammatories.

Got questions?

Call us at (410) 529-7297.