

Post-Operative Femoral Head and Neck Excision (FHNE) Instructions

Many, but not all, dogs receive an epidural injection of an anesthetic agent called bupivacaine prior to surgery. The purpose of the injection is to relieve intra-operative and post-operative discomfort. The downside of this injection is that it can lead to temporary weakness of the hind limbs and urine retention. As such, your dog may require some assistance when standing and walking. It is imperative that his or her urination be observed. If he or she has not urinated by the morning following surgery, please contact your veterinarian or one of the emergency hospitals. They might recommend bringing your dog in so that his or her urinary bladder can be palpated and possibly expressed.

Activity:

Activity should be limited to a small room or kennel for the first 2-3 days following surgery in order to allow the post-operative pain and inflammation to decrease. Thereafter, activity should be encouraged. For dogs, slow leash walks will encourage the patient to place and use the operated limb. Those leash walks can be as long as 20-30 minutes depending upon the tolerance of the pet. Supporting with a towel or other such sling under the belly and in front of the legs may be necessary when going across slick floors or up and down stairs.

Range-of-Motion Exercises:

Beginning 48 hours following surgery, apply a cold compress (e.g. a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel) to the operated hip for approximately 5-20 minutes depending upon the size of the patient. Remove the cold compress. Carefully and gently push the stifle (knee) back thus extending the hip. Do not extend the hip any farther than the pet will tolerate. After holding the hip at the tolerated extreme for 5-10 seconds, allow the hip to relax for 5-10 seconds. That is one repetition. If possible, perform 10-15 repetitions per session with 4-6 sessions per day. Initially, the range of motion will be very little. With time, however, the range will increase. It is imperative that one concentrate on restoration of extensor range of motion as that appears to be the greatest limiting factor following this procedure. For the first 2-4 days of therapy, apply cold compresses before and after the exercise sessions. Thereafter, apply a warm compress (moist towel heated in a microwave oven) before and after the exercises.

Please keep in mind that the goal is to achieve a nearly complete range of motion by skin staple or suture removal (10-14 days post-operatively). Do not try to accomplish this in one or two days. Go slowly. Take "baby" steps.

If warranted, your veterinarian may recommend physical rehabilitation with one of the other hospitals in town providing that service.

Incisional Care:

Your pet will likely leave the hospital with a small patch bandage covering the incision. The patch bandage generally comes off on its own 1-3 days after surgery. If it is adhered well, it may stay on until skin staple or suture removal at 10-14 days post-operatively. Once the incision is uncovered, monitor it for discharge such as blood, serum or pus. If noted please call your veterinarian.