

Post-Operative Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy (TPLO) Instructions

Your dog received an epidural injection of an anesthetic agent today. The purpose of the injection is to relieve 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 will most likely 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. They might recommend bringing your dog back so that his or her urinary bladder can be palpated and possibly expressed.

Activity Limitation:

Limit activity to brief leash walks for urination and defecation until the bone is healed based on radiographs (x-rays). For the first 2 weeks after surgery, limit the walks to 5-10 minutes 2-4 times daily. 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. After the first 2 weeks, if your dog will tolerate it, the duration of the walks can be increased to 15-20 minutes. When in doubt, less activity is better than more.

Range-of-Motion Exercises:

Beginning on the morning following surgery, apply a cold compress (e.g. a bag of frozen peas wrapped in a towel) to the operated stifle (knee) for approximately 10 minutes if your dog will tolerate it. Remove the cold compress. Gently tickle the toes thus causing him or her to pull the leg up as far as is tolerable. Initially, this will not be very far. Hold the paw at that extreme for 5-10 seconds and then allow the leg to extend and relax for 5-10 seconds. That is one repetition. Perform 10-15 repetitions 3-4 times daily. For the first 2-4 days post-operatively, apply cold compresses for 5-10 minutes 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 removal (10-14 days post-operatively). Do not try to accomplish this in one or two days. Go slowly. Take "baby" steps.

Incisional Care:

Your dog will likely leave the hospital with a small patch bandage covering the incisions. 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 removal at 10-14 days post-operatively. Regardless of when the bandage comes off, it does not need to be replaced. Once the incision is uncovered, monitor it for discharge such as blood, serum or pus. If noted please call your veterinarian.

Radiographs:

Radiographs to assess healing of the bone should be taken by your veterinarian approximately 8 weeks following surgery. Assuming the bone is healed at that time, you will be directed to return your dog to unrestricted activity over the subsequent month. An instruction sheet with that protocol has been provided.