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Post Surgical Care of Bone & Joint Surgeries

1. Your pet's activities must be very restricted for the first 8 weeks following surgery. This restriction is needed because the bone pieces are held only by the implanted hardware until the body heals and strengthens the bone. This process takes at least 8 weeks. Any excess, repeated strain can loosen the hardware and cause failure of the surgical repair. Three activities are allowed: a) Your pet can be in the house under your immediate supervision on a carpeted surface without playing. b) Your pet should be either in his or her crate or in a small room while you are away. c) The third option is for your pet to be under your direct supervision **on leash** while airing outside. **No prolonged walks are allowed.** These restrictions are imposed during the bone healing process to secure the anticipated surgical results. **NO FREE ACTIVITIES ARE ALLOWED UNTIL AFTER HEALING HAS OCCURRED AND IS CONFIRMED BY RADIOGRAPHS.**
2. The same day as the surgery and the following day you may apply cold packs (ice wrapped in a towel, bag of frozen corn or peas) to the surgical area for 7-10 minutes 3-6 times a day. To enhance the benefit, the leg may be covered with a wet towel and the cold pack placed on the wet towel.
3. Inflammation and swelling is usually the worst the first 2-3 days following surgery. If your pet becomes acutely more sore or hurts or has continued swelling or has a discharge, please contact us. Sharp yelps or cries and/or a change in usage of the limb are indications of potential problems.
4. Soft bedding should be provided throughout the convalescent period.
5. Discourage your pet from licking at their incisions. Licking leads to chewing and allows bacteria to enter the surgical wound and cause infection. Bandages and casts should always be kept clean and dry. Any odors or persistent licking and chewing are indications of a possible problem. When in doubt, remove the bandage and call us.
6. Starting on day 3, local application of heat may be started. A towel (dry or moist) may be warmed in a microwave. Test the towel on your own arm for 30 seconds to be sure it is not too hot and wrap the towel around the affected area for 15-20 minutes. To maintain the temperature it is a good idea to place another towel over the heated one to insure that it does not cool down too quickly. While applying the warm towel, gently flex and extend the joint to provide range of motion exercises. Start with 4-10 repetitions 2-4 times daily.

7. Gently massage by gliding the skin over the underlying muscle (effleurage) for 5-10 minutes after the range of motion exercises. This reduces muscle spasm, increases blood and lymphatic flow and reduces edema (swelling).
8. Keep your appointment for 2 weeks post-operatively to monitor soft tissue healing. Radiographs are taken at 8 - 10 weeks post operatively to confirm bone healing. After bone healing has been confirmed by radiographs, your pet can begin the rehabilitation process.

If at any time you have questions or are not sure of anything, please call us. It's better to remedy any abnormality earlier versus later.