



# COLD LAKE VETERINARY CLINIC

## Post-Operative Rehabilitation Plan

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It is very important to note that **exercise restriction** is a very key part to rehabilitating a dog who has just had a knee surgery performed. We **do not** want them to have access to stairs, off leash running or play, rough housing with other dogs or children, etc. This may mean that the dog needs to be **restricted** to a certain room in the house, a crate, or has an area sectioned off for them using gates.

Good footing is a must for dogs after surgery as well, so **avoid** areas that are slippery or add things like an area rug, so they don't slip and injure their joint. Please note that jumping **MUST NOT** happen under any circumstances (couch, bed, vehicle, etc). Inability to restrict a dog's activity post operatively **WILL** cause the suture to break and the repair to **fail**.

\*Things to watch for that indicate you should return for a **recheck** with your veterinarian:

- Swelling of the knee beyond the first 3-4 days
  - Some swelling is normal for the first several days after surgery.
- Discharge from the incision
  - Sometimes clear fluid from the incision is normal but if you aren't sure then return for a recheck, please
- Excessive bleeding from the incision
  - A small amount of bleeding for 24-48 hours immediately after surgery is normal but if there is a large amount of bleeding or bleeding beyond 2 days after surgery then please return for a recheck.
- A little discomfort is normal on the repaired knee and along the incision.
  - If you feel the level of pain is too much or you can't control it with icing and pain medications, then contact your veterinarian.

For more detailed information, step by step instructions and videos on how to perform rehab exercises please go to [topdoghealth.com](http://topdoghealth.com). This resource is free to owners!

## **Week 1:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Length of time</b>	<b>Times per day</b>	<b>How to perform</b>
Massage	5-10 minutes	3 times per day	Gentle massage of the whole limb but not directly over the incision. Do this prior to starting exercises
Passive Range of Motion	10 repetitions	2 times per day	With dog lying on it's side, slowly extend and flex all the joints on the leg. Can do each joint individually or all together. If your pet will not tolerate this, do NOT force it
Slow and Controlled Leashed Walks	5 minutes	2-3 times per day	These walks can be used to take your dog outside for bathroom breaks at first. Go slow so that your dog will use the affected leg. Some dogs will need help walking in the hind end and you can support them with a towel or sling under the belly
Cold Therapy	10-15 minutes (after exercise)	2-3 times daily. Repeat after exercise (rehab or leashed walk)	Wrap an ice pack or frozen veggies in a towel and apply directly to both sides of the knee.
Moist Heat **Only start this 4 days after surgery**	10 minutes (before exercise)	Repeat before exercise (rehab or leashed walks) or when very stiff	Ways to have moist heat include gel, beads or rice packs that are commercially available. You may also use a warm wet towel. Make sure it is not too hot so you don't cause burns when applied to the knee

\*\* If at any stage of rehabilitation, you notice that your dog is uncomfortable or starts to show increasing signs of lameness, take a step back and go back to doing the previous week's activity level instead. For example, if your dog becomes sore or has difficulty doing 10 minutes of walking, revert back to 5 minutes of walking instead for a few days and then try to progress slowly to longer. \*\*

## **Week 2:**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Length of time</b>	<b>Times per day</b>	<b>How to perform</b>
Moist Heat	10 minutes (before exercise)	Repeat before exercise (rehab or leashed walks)	Ways to have moist heat include gel, beads or rice packs that are commercially available. You may also use a warm wet towel. Make sure it is not too hot so you don't cause burns when applied to the knee
Massage	10 minutes	2 times per day	Gentle massage of the whole limb but not directly over the incision
Passive Range of Motion	15 repetitions	2-3 times per day	With dog lying on its side, slowly extend and flex all the joints on the leg. Can do each joint individually or all together. If your pet will not tolerate this, do NOT force it
Slow and Controlled Leashed Walks	5-10 minutes	3-4 times per day	These walks can be used to take your dog outside for bathroom breaks at first. Go slow so that your dog will use the affected leg. Some dogs will need help walking in the hind end and you can support them with a towel or sling under the belly
Cold Therapy	10-15 minutes (after exercise)	Repeat after exercise (rehab or leashed walk)	Wrap an ice pack or frozen veggies in a towel and apply directly to both sides of the knee.
Balancing	5 minutes	2 times daily	Have dog stand with both feet on a soft surface like a pillow or soft foam pad and gently shift his weight back and forth by pressing on either hip

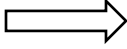
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### **Week 3:**

Activity	Length of time	Times per day	How to perform
Moist Heat	As needed		Ways to have moist heat include gel, beads or rice packs that are commercially available. You may also use a warm wet towel. Make sure it is not too hot so you don't cause burns when applied to the knee
Massage	10 minutes	2-3 times per day	Gentle massage of the whole limb but not directly over the incision
Passive Range of Motion	Can be discontinued if your dog is using the leg well on walks		
Slow and Controlled Leashed Walks	15-20 minutes	3-4 times per day	These walks can be used to take your dog outside for bathroom breaks at first. Go slow so that your dog will use the affected leg. Some dogs will need help walking in the hind end and you can support them with a towel or sling under the belly
Sit-to-Stand	5 repetitions	2-3 times per day	In this exercise, you want your dog to sit squarely in the hind end and then immediately stand back up
Balancing	5 minutes	2 times daily	Have dog stand with both feet on a soft surface like a pillow or soft foam pad and gently shift his weight back and forth by pressing on either hip
Cold Therapy	Can discontinue if dog is comfortable after exercises. Can be started again as needed when there is swelling or pain.		

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### **Week 4-5:**

Activity	Length of time	Times per day	How to perform
Moist Heat	Can discontinue now. If your dog enjoys it you can do it 1-2 times a day		
Massage	Only as needed		
Passive Range of Motion	Can be discontinued if your dog is using the leg well on walks		
Slow and Controlled Leashed Walks	20 minutes  *If doing well, can increase activity  	3-4 times per day	These walks can be used to take your dog outside for bathroom breaks at first. Go slow so that your dog will use the affected leg. Some dogs will need help walking in the hind end and you can support them with a towel or sling under the belly  *You can increase the activity level to occasional trotting and give your dog 10-15 feet of leash if he is comfortable and using the leg very well
Sit-to-Stand	10 repetitions	3-4 times per day	In this exercise, you want your dog to sit squarely in the hind end and then immediately stand back up
Figure 8's	10 repetitions	3-4 times per day	Walk with your dog beside you in a figure 8 pattern. Can adjust the size of the circles based on how much difficulty your dog has with this exercise

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**Week 6:**

Activity	Length of time	Times per day	How to perform
Moist Heat	Discontinue if using leg consistently		
Massage	Discontinue		
Passive Range of Motion	Discontinue		
Slow and Controlled Leashed Walks	20-30 minutes	3-4 times per day	
On Leash Hill Work	5-10 minutes	1-2 times per day	Find a gentle incline and walk slowly up the hill. Can be done at an angle if straight up the hill is too difficult
Sit-to-Stand	10-15 repetitions	3-4 times per day	In this exercise, you want your dog to sit squarely in the hind end and then immediately stand back up
Figure 8's	10-20 repetitions	3-4 times per day	Walk with your dog beside you in a figure 8 pattern. Can adjust the size of the circles based on how much difficulty your dog has with this exercise