

Step-by-Step Guide to Post-
Surgical Home Therapy for
Pet Owners

TTA

Tibial Tuberosity Advancement



Home Therapy Booklet™



Introduction to Home Therapy Program™ Booklets

This booklet was developed to serve as a guideline during this crucial post-operative healing time. Included within is a week-by-week protocol, which should be followed to the best of your ability. To assist you in keeping track of the day-to-day “to do’s” a daily calendar has been included, which you can fill out. In addition, there are visual aids and descriptions to help guide you through the various therapy tasks. We hope that you find this booklet to be an indispensable resource during the next several weeks of your pet’s recovery.

DISCLAIMER: This booklet is not a substitute to a personal evaluation and therapy program created by a licensed veterinarian or certified canine rehabilitation practitioner. If at anytime during therapy your dog is injured it is not the responsibility of TopDog Health and you should seek veterinary advice as soon as possible.

WARNING: We strongly encourage the use of MUZZLES during any of the suggested hands on therapies for the protection of the animal and owner.

IMPORTANT: It cannot be emphasized enough that if restricted activity is indicated, you must do your absolute best to follow these guidelines. Many times, dogs want to increase their activity level because they are “FEELING BETTER”, but doing too much too soon can be detrimental to the surgical repair.



Home Therapy Program™

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Introduction to Canine Rehabilitation

Physical therapy, as a profession, has been traced as far back as World War I. Over the last century the profession has developed and evolved into one of the major cornerstones of modern day medicine. The physical therapists' mastery of the musculoskeletal system and ability to treat movement dysfunctions has made them indispensable, especially in post-surgical cases.

Over the last decade, veterinary medicine has experienced tremendous growth in the level of medical care that it is able to provide to our patients. This is due in part to the equally overwhelming growth of the human-animal bond. Our animals are not just “pets” anymore...they are members of the FAMILY. With that comes the responsibility of the veterinary community to offer, provide, and educate clients on any diagnostic or treatment modality that would be beneficial to the health and well-being of our patients.

Interest in canine rehabilitation originated in the 1980's and due to public interest has gained tremendous momentum over the last 10 years. In 1999, the First Symposium for Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation in Veterinary Medicine was held at Oregon State University. Animal physical therapy professional organizations are now internationally recognized in over 10 countries.

Established in 2004, TopDog Health has set out to become the leader in the field of physical rehabilitation for animals in the United States. Spanning orthopedic, neurologic, soft tissue injuries and weight management, TopDog Health has developed physical rehabilitation programs and treatment protocols to assist veterinary hospitals and pet owners by giving their patients and pets the best tools for successful recovery and to improve overall quality of life.

Preparing for the Homecoming

Here are a few tips on how to ensure a safe home environment

Preparing the House

It is important to have a plan on how and where you are going to restrict or confine your dog during this crucial post-operative period. Quality rest is as important as having a good therapy plan. Many owners incorporate one of the following:

- Dog Crate
- Gated off area ie. kitchen
- Room confinement

No Jumping at All!

It is **EXTREMELY** important not to allow your dog to jump, AT ALL!!!! Over extension of the stifle (“knee”) could compromise the repair and slow healing time.

- NO JUMPING on/off bed
- NO JUMPING on/off couch
- No JUMPING up on you

No Stairs!

Stairs, like jumping, will over stress the joint and inhibit repair. In the beginning stages, right after surgery and until your veterinarian says it is okay, it is imperative that you do what you can to prevent your pet from going up and down stairs. However, if you have no way of avoiding stairs to get your dog into and out of the house, or your dog is too big to carry, you need to take the following precautions:

- **Restrict-** Make sure to have your leash attached before you open the door.
- **Support-** Use a towel or commercially available harness or belly support
- **Limit-** Block off all stairs that your dog could potentially have access to.

No Horsing Around

As much as you would like to play with your dog or have him/her play with other dog friends, this is not a good idea until your veterinarian gives you the green light to do so.

Walking Surfaces

Wood floors, tile, linoleum, etc. can all be very slippery to your recovering pet. Consider putting down some throw rugs with rubber backing to make it easier for your dog.

My dog's leg was just fixed. So why is he still limping?

Initially your dog is going to limp on the surgically repaired leg. This is because it is still uncomfortable for him/her to get around on that leg. Think about how you would walk if you had just had a surgical repair to one of your legs; it is the same for our pets. What you should see over the course of the following weeks is the degree of limping decreasing. It is important to note that if your pet slightly overdoes an activity one day during recovery, they may begin to limp a bit more severely than they have been. If this is the case, you should apply ice, allow a good 24 hours of rest, give any prescribed pain medication, and call your veterinarian if needed.



Normals

After Surgery

Abnormals

- Swelling around the incision and to the repaired leg (this should only last for the first 3-4 days following surgery)
- Bruising around the incision or on the leg
- A small amount of discharge from the incision that is clear or even a little blood tinged
- Discomfort on the repaired leg and around the incision
- Warm to the touch around

- Swelling that last longer then a 3-4 days
- Bruising in areas other than the incision site
- Discharge that is not clear
- Large amounts of discharge
- Bleeding that does not stop
- Discomfort that is not alleviated with ice application and the pain medication prescribed by you veterinarian
- Discomfort that causes your pet to cry out or bite

The Week-by-Week Protocol

For Tibial Tuberosity Advancement (TTA)

The following weekly protocol has many benefits. It is important to follow these guidelines as closely as possible in order to:

- Speed the recovery of the weak limb
- Decrease pain and enhance healing of injured tissue
- Prevent further disuse muscle atrophy
- Restore normal range of motion
- Decrease possibility of further compensatory problems

**** WARNING ****

During all times outside of therapy STRICT CONFINEMENT is MANDATORY.

It is extremely important to follow this protocol as closely as possible to ensure proper recovery. Any form of rambunctious activity is PROHIBITED during this critical recovery period.

**** IMPORTANT ****

PERFORM ALL THERAPIES IN THE ORDER DESCRIBED

**** REMEMBER ****

All dogs will recover from surgery at a different speed. Check with your veterinarian about any specific precautions for your dog.

Week 1

*****Important*****

If and any time you feel that your pet is in discomfort due to the surgery call your veterinarian so they can prescribe the proper medications.

1) Massage

(5-10 min.) (3-4 times/day) (See page 15)

This is best done with your pet lying on his/her side on a comfortable surface. Start by gently rubbing the affected limb from the toes up the leg. If your pet is reluctant to have this done, try using less pressure or try again when he/she is calmer. Do not force any therapy.

2) Passive Range of Motion (PROM)

(10 repetitions) (3-4 times/day) (See page 16)

The goal of PROM is to manually simulate the normal motions of each joint. This is best done after massage and with your pet laying on his/her side. Starting with the hip, gently extend and flex. Continue onto the knee and ankle. Be sure to support the leg carefully with your other hand while performing these movements. Do not force PROM. If your pet seems uncomfortable, stop and try again at another time.

3) Short and Slow Controlled Leash Walks

(5 min.) (3-4 times/day) (See page 19)

These walks should really be for elimination purposes only at first. The slower your dog walks, the more likely they will place the repaired leg down while walking. If needed, use a support harness or towel under the belly to support your dog's hind end.

****** WARNING ******

DO NOT ALLOW YOUR DOG TO RUN, JUMP, OR CLIMB STAIRS!

4) Ice Therapy

(10-15 min. after exercise) (See page 13)

Following the above therapy exercises it is important to apply cold therapy to the affected knee. You can use commercial gel ice packs or even frozen vegetables. For most ice packs, wrap them in a towel, bag, etc. before applying.

Week 2

****NOTE****

3 days after the surgery you can begin applying **Moist Heat** prior to your therapy session with your dog (see next page for description). **DO NOT** do this prior to 3 days post-op or if the swelling around the joint is still significant; wait a few more days to begin this modality.

1) Moist Heat

(10 min. prior to exercise) (See page 14)

For this therapy, a commercial moist heat product is advised. Moist heat has been shown to penetrate tissue better than dry heat. Types of moist heat are available in most drug stores. Another way to provide moist heat is to take a washcloth and wet it with warm water. The heat should be warm enough to the touch but not so hot that it burns you when you are applying it to your dog's joint. (See page 12)

2) Massage

(10 min.) (3-4 times/day) (See page 15)

3) Passive Range of Motion (PROM)

(15 repetitions) (3-4 times a day) (See page 16)

4) Short and Slow Controlled Leash Walks

(5-10 min.) (3-4 times a day) (See page 19)

Week 3

1) Moist Heat

(10 min. prior to exercise) (See page 14)

2) Massage

(10 min.) (2-3 times/day) (See page 15)

3) PROM as needed

If your dog is getting out for his walks and is using his leg, you can discontinue PROM.

4) Slow Controlled Leash Walks

(15-20 min) (3-4 times/day) (See page 19)

5) Sit-to-Stand exercises

(5-7 repetitions) (3-4 times/day) (See page 20)

We call these “puppy squats”. Basically, you want to get your dog to sit down and immediately stand back up. This encourages extension/flexion of all joints in the rear legs and also works the muscles surrounding his stifle. Do this at a time when your dog is most likely to oblige, like when it is feeding time. If you have to use treats to get your dog to do this make sure they are low-fat and low-calorie or only give tiny pieces.

6) Discontinue post-therapy icing as long as there is no apparent discomfort. However, the use of ice may be resumed post-therapy if the dog appears to be uncomfortable or swelling increases.

Week 4

1) Moist Heat as needed This does not need to be done 3-4 times/day anymore, if your dog seems to enjoy the heat, apply it 1-2 times/day, otherwise it can be discontinued)

2) Massage as needed

3) PROM as needed

4) Controlled Leash Walks

(Increase to 20 min)(3-4 times/day) (See page 19)

At this point, you can now begin to allow more freedom for your dog during walks—up to 10-15ft on a leash. This encourages more intermittent trotting which is good to build up muscle girth and strength.

5) Sit-to-Stand exercises

(Increase to 10 repetitions)(3-4 times/day) (See page 20)

6) Figure 8's

(10 repetitions)(3-4 times/day) (See page 24)

To perform “Figure 8's,” simply walk as if you are following an imaginary 8 drawn onto the ground. The top of the 8 is one circle and the bottom of the 8 is another circle that intersects in the middle. Each top and bottom portion of the 8 should be equal to about a 10 meter circle. If your dog has difficulty balancing this 8, make it bigger. The purpose of “Figure 8's” is to increase muscle strength and encourage balance.

**** WARNING****

If you notice any signs of lameness or discomfort while increasing any of the above mentioned exercises, revert to the previous week's level of activity. For example: during week three you notice that your dog becomes very fatigued after walking for 20 minutes. Return to walking for 10-15 min., until your dog is able to tolerate this level of activity for a few days, and then try again to progress to 15-20 minutes

Weeks 5-8

1) Discontinue Moist Heat, PROM and massage as long as your dog is using his limb consistently.

2) Controlled Leash Walks with hill work

(20-30 min. with 5-10 min. hill work) (3-4 times/day) (Do hills 1-2 times/day)

(See page 21)

Find an incline that is suitable for your dog to walk up and down. While on your daily walks, slowly walk your dog up and down this incline. Begin with about 5 minutes of hill work and slowly increase to 10 minutes after a few days. Hills are great for the quadriceps and hamstrings, which help support the knee.

3) Sit-to-Stand exercises

(10-15 repetitions) (3-4 times/day) (See page 20)

4) Figure 8's

(10-20 repetitions)(3-4 times/day) (See page 24)

5) Curb work

(10-20 feet) (3-4 times/day on walks) (See page 24)

Curb work is basically stepping up and off a length of curb while on your walk with your dog. The curb should be appropriate for your dog's height. A small 10-30 pound dog should step on and off a curb that is about 2" high, a 40-70 pound dog should use a curb that is about 3" high and all bigger dogs should use a curb that is about 3-5" high. Any surface that has some height can be used for this purpose; it does not have to be a curb but you do need a length of about 20 feet to perform this exercise, which is why curbs work best. While on your walk, simply step up and off the curb for a length of 10-20 feet, making an "S" pattern as you walk on and off the curb. Curb work is great to increase muscle strength, girth, and balance, as well as improve flexion and extension. Go at a pace that is comfortable for your pet. If your dog seems to have any difficulty with this exercise, do not perform it at this time.

Weeks 9-12

Note

You now are nearing the end of total recovery; these next few weeks are the strengthening period. These exercises can be used as a guideline for you to challenge your dog in a variety of ways while regaining lost strength and muscle tone.

1) Stair work

(5-7 steps in a row) (1-3 times/day) (See page 22)

At this stage, you can begin to incorporate stairs as a form of exercise. Start with your dog on a leash and, if needed, a towel under the belly to support him/her. Walk slowly up about 3 stairs to start, and then slowly walk back down. Increase the number of stairs and the frequency of stairs each week. DO NOT give your dog free access to the stairs yet, it is still too early. Always keep your dog on a leash while doing this exercise.

2) Supervised, off-leash or long leash activity

As long as your veterinarian allows it, your pet can have some off-leash time under strict supervision. If you know your dog cannot be controlled from jumping, chasing balls, butterflies, toys, other dogs, etc. while off-leash, do not allow him/her to partake in any off-leash activities yet.

3) Controlled Leash Walks with hill work

(30 min total with 10 min. on hills)(3-4 times a day) (See page 21)

4) Sit-to-Stand exercises

(10-15 repetitions) (3-4 times a day) (See page 20)

5) Figure 8's

(20 repetitions) (3-4 times/day on walks) (See page 24)

6) Curb work

(20 feet) (3-4 times a day on walks) (See page 24)

7) Jogging

(Intervals of 20 feet) (3-4 times/day on walks)

If possible, while on walk get your dog to jog for a length of 20 feet and then stop. Jogging increases muscle strength and girth.

8) Swimming

(5-10 min) (1-2 times/week) (See page 23)

Swimming can be performed as long as your veterinarian approves. It is best done in a controlled environment, preferably in a pool and under direct supervision. Your dog should be lifted into and out of the body of water and held in place or allowed to swim with assistance for about 2-5 minutes. Your dog should not be allowed to jump into or out of water to swim. Swimming is great for increasing muscle and range of motion. Your local canine rehabilitation facility is a great place to perform this exercise.

Therapy Modalities

Cold Therapy

Moist heat

Massage

Passive Range of Motion (PROM)

Stretching

Cold Therapy

The Indications:

Cryotherapy, the use of cold in healing, is the most underutilized therapy in veterinary medicine today. If you were to have knee surgery, you would leave the operating room with your leg immobilized in an inflatable icing unit and then you would undergo aggressive icing thereafter. It should not be any different for your dog. Cryotherapy is extremely important for the first 72 hours after surgery. It is also important after an acute injury or strenuous exercise. It works by stimulating constriction of the blood vessels, thereby slowing circulation to the injured area and preventing many of the “bad” inflammatory mediators from harming tissue. The cold also slows nerve conduction velocity (i.e., slowing the pain signal), as well as, decreasing localized swelling. All of these contribute to helping reduce pain.

The Benefits:

- Decreases inflammation
- Decreases pain
- Decreases healing time

The How to's:

Any of the following can be used: commercial cold gel packs, ice wrapped in cloth, or a bag of frozen peas. Of all these, TopDog prefers the gel packs due to their ease of use and conforming nature. When icing, it is best to perform while your dog is lying on its side, relaxed. Place the cold source directly over or around the affected area. If your dog reacts to the direct application, try laying a towel between the cold source and the skin. Each icing session should last 10 minutes.

The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol.



Moist Heat Therapy

WARNING

Before applying heat to your dog, test the surface temperature of the heating unit to your own skin and hold for 20 seconds. If it does not burn you, it should not burn your dog.

The Indications:

Moist heating is the second most underutilized therapeutic modality in veterinary medicine. Moist heat is recommended versus dry heat due to the fact that the moisture allows the heat to penetrate deeper into tissue. Heat therapy is NOT to be used until 72 hours post surgery or injury. It is contraindicated during any acute inflammatory process, over open wounds, edema or cancerous tissue.

The Benefits:

- Increases local blood flow
- Increases local tissue metabolism
- Increases tissue stretch ability
- Stimulates the healing phase
- Decreases pain
- Relaxes muscle



The How to's:

It is best to utilize moist heating prior to performing ROM, stretching, and exercise to ensure full benefits. There are a number of commercial heating packs available today, such as those filled with corn, rice, etc. Many of these can be used as both hot and cold therapy aids. At TopDog, we use a variety of these products, all purchased at your local pharmacy. Like cold therapy, it is easiest to perform the heat therapy while your dog is lying down and relaxing.

The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol.

Massage

The Indications:

Though having a certified massage therapist perform this therapy is ideal, you can perform many of the core massage techniques yourself and transfer the healing power of touch to your dog. It is important not to focus solely on the affected limb, but on the whole body. Remember, the other musculoskeletal parts of your dog's body have been compensating due to disuse of the affected leg. Over time, this puts extra strain on these body parts.

The Benefits:

- Psychologically beneficial because it enhances the human-animal bond
- Helps relieve stress and anxiety
- Decreases pain by stimulating endorphin release
- Improves circulation and lymphatic flow
- Decreases edema
- Decreases fibrosis by relieving contracture of the tendons and muscle
- Helps maintain muscle tone



The How to's:

While lying on its side, begin by gently stroking your dog to initiate relaxation. Applying medium pressure, run your hand over your dogs' entire body, starting at the neck, moving down to the tail and down each limb for a total of 4 times. This should be done at the beginning and end of each session. Once the dog is relaxed you can begin active massage/rubbing. Maintain the same depth of pressure throughout your movements. This active massage should always begin at the toes and work up the limbs. If during the massage you note that there is significantly more muscle tone in one area, you can perform compression by using the palm of your hand over the affected muscle and applying pressure for a controlled 20 seconds then release.

The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol.

Passive Range of Motion

The Indications:

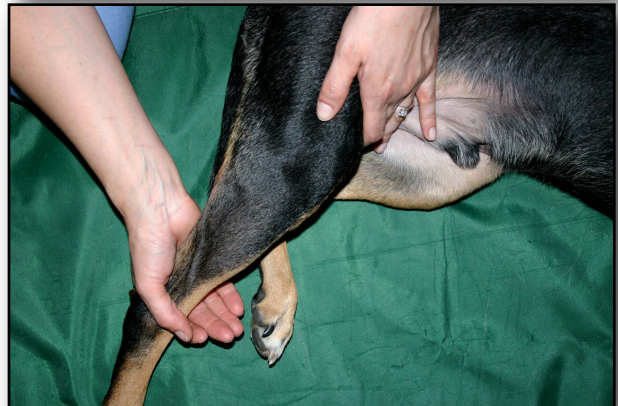
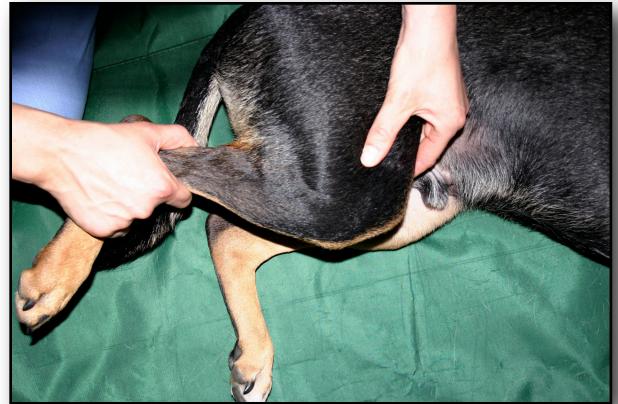
Passive Range of Motion (PROM), though a simple concept, is for many quite difficult to understand. It is defined as the use of an external force (i.e., human hands), which moves the joint through its available ROM without muscle contractions. To better understand the concept, place your left hand around your right wrist. Now, without contracting any muscles in your right arm, use your left arm to guide your right elbow through its available ROM. This type of therapy is extremely important for your dog's knee after surgery. If a joint stays in one position too long, the limb will lose flexibility. This increased stiffness can lead to a slower return to activities such as walking.

The Benefits:

- Improves joint motion after surgery
- Prevents joint contracture
- Prevents soft tissue inflexibility and shortening
- Prevents adhesions between soft tissue and bones
- Enhances joint lubrication
- Decreases pain

The How to's:

It is extremely important to make sure that your dog is comfortable and relaxed prior to this exercise. Although PROM can be performed while the dog is standing, it is generally more relaxing and beneficial to have your dog lying on its side. It is very important to be gentle and not create any pain or discomfort. Support the limb both above and below the knee joint. Move the limb below the joint in a smooth and controlled fashion, while keeping above the joint steady. Gently move back and forth throughout the joint's full range of motion. Good Job! Try to perform 20 repetitions if the dog will allow you, otherwise, perform the movements as best you can over a 5 minute time period.



Another Technique

First think of how your leg moves while you pedal on a bicycle. All of your joints benefit from this fluid movement. While your dog is lying comfortably and relaxed on its side, hold his/her foot to recreate this “bicycling” movement.

The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol.

Stretching

The Indications:

Once an animal begins to not fully use its limb properly, several negative processes begin to take place. Aside from the negative effects on the joints, disuse adversely affects the muscle and other soft tissues, often times leading to muscle weakness and atrophy, contracture, adaptive shortening and potential adhesions. Proper stretching and ROM can counteract many of these negative forces and should be taken very seriously. There are many different types of stretching, but for our purposes, we are going to focus on static-passive stretching. With this, you are going to place your dog's leg in a position (i.e., flexed or extended) and then hold it for 15 seconds. NOTE: It is important to understand that stretching is different from the ROM exercises, because stretching involves gentle forcing of the tissue beyond its normal ROM.

The Benefits:

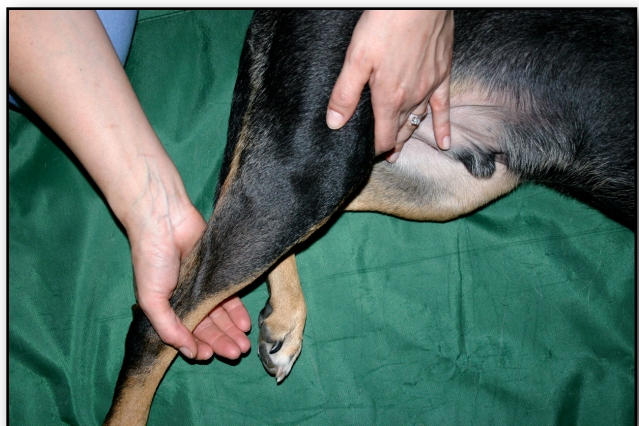
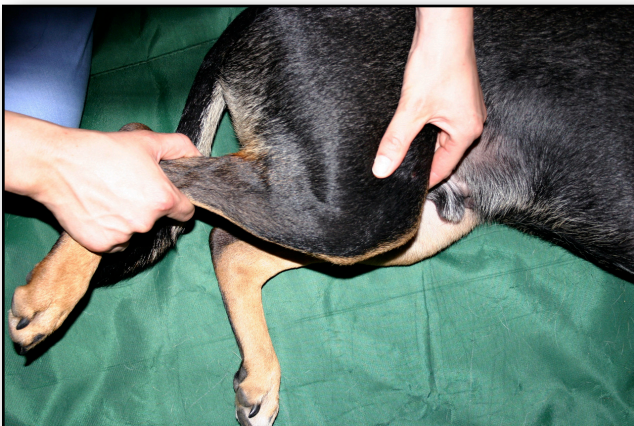
- Increases flexibility of joints
- Increases extensibility of muscle, tendons and surrounding joint tissue
- Counteracts contracture forces

The How to's:

Like ROM exercises, it is best to perform proper stretching while your dog is lying on its side. Effort should be made to have your dog as relaxed as possible during stretching. Make sure to properly support the leg above and below the knee. Gently manipulate the knee to the COMFORTABLE end of its normal ROM in flexion. At the end you are going to apply JUST A TOUCH more pressure and HOLD this position for 15 seconds. Then allow the limb to return to a neutral position for 15 seconds then repeat for a total of 10 times. Do this for both flexion and extension.

The How Many's:

See the week-by week protocol. Good stretching should be incorporated at least 3 times/week



Strengthening Exercises

Slow controlled leash walks

Sit-to-stand

Slow controlled hill walking

Stairs

Swimming

Slow Controlled Leash Walking

The Indications:

There is a very large misconception about what a short controlled leash walk means. It does **NOT** mean clipping on the retractable leash and heading out for a leisure walk. What it does mean is that your dog must be kept at a short lead (i.e., very close to your body), so that you have complete control over your dog. These short, **SLOW** walks are no doubt one of the **MOST IMPORTANT EXERCISES** to be performed during the early recovery period. By walking **SLOWLY** you will be encouraging your dog to use the affected limb in a very careful manner. Too much activity during the initial phase of recovery can be detrimental, but walking for short distances is beneficial to keep the muscles strong and the joints lubricated. Short walks can also be a positive emotional reward for the dog as well. Being upright and on all four limbs can do wonders to improve your dog's mood!

The Benefits:

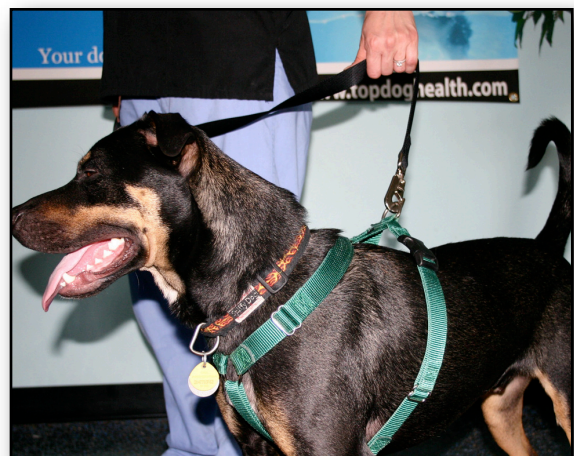
- Encourages use of affected limb
- Decreases disuse atrophy
- Increases strength
- Decreases pain

The How to's:

Use the pictures provided as a guideline for what is considered a short lead. Initially, the walks will be for elimination only. As time progresses, so will the duration of the necessary walks. It is very important to praise your dog when it is using the limb while walking. This will encourage your dog to use it normally.

The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol.



Sit-to-Stand Puppy Squats

The Indications:

This is a great exercise to perform at home, because in addition to strengthening the quadriceps, hamstrings, gastrocnemius and gluteal muscle groups, the Sit-to-Stand exercise will also improve overall ROM of the hip, knee and hock. In order to gain the full benefit of this exercise, it requires practicing proper form. It is important to try to make this exercise as fun as possible and therefore should involve some treats and a positive emotional reward from you.

The Benefits:

- Strengthens and builds muscle mass of the major hind leg muscle groups
- Improves overall ROM

The How to's:

Ask your dog to sit in order to evaluate his/her form. Prior to and after surgery, many dogs will often sit with one leg out or lean to one side. They do this because they are experiencing discomfort or, for some dogs, that is just the way they have always sat.

Proper Sitting form should be "Square" with both legs flexed and equally positioned under the dog's body.

Proper Standing from the *sit* position should involve an equal push from both hind legs. Do not expect perfection the first time or even after the 10th time. Consistent repetition and practice, along with encouragement for proper form are the keys to success.

Tip: Make it fun and rewarding. Make sure you have good treats and remember it is not quantity, but quality that matters. Your dog will get the same joy out of a treat from you no matter the size. Tiny pieces are just as good, and are healthier for your dog. 😊

Tip: Ask your dog to sit, wait 2-3 seconds and step backwards then ask him/her to come to you and sit again. Repeat. Best to perform outside or in a room with rugs.

Tip: If your dog sits with improper form you can perform this exercise with your dog standing along side a wall, with the affected limb on the inside. Remember that proper form is the most important aspect of this exercise. Therefore if your dog only makes it down ½ way before compromising good form, then this is your starting point. Have your dog start to sit and then when you see "that" change, have him/her stand immediately. Eventually, you will get your dog to sit squarely all the way down.

The How Many's:

See your week-by-week protocol.



Slow Controlled Hill Walking

Walking on hills or slopes is a wonderful exercise to strengthen your dog's hind limbs. When walking up a hill, the majority of a dog's weight is shifted to the rear legs. This will increase weight bearing on the affected leg significantly. Therefore this is a great strengthening exercise for the four major muscle groups of the hind legs. Walking uphill also improves hip and knee extension. Walking downhill is more difficult because it requires more flexion/extension of the hip, knee and hock. In this way, it too is beneficial.

It is also beneficial to walk your dog perpendicularly across the hill with the affected leg on the downward side of the hill. This will force the dog to put a greater amount of weight on the affected leg.

The grade of the hill is a factor but any hill or slope can be used with caution. Watch your dog for signs of discomfort if you suspect the hill to be too steep and only do a portion of the hill or slope if it seems too long.

NOTE

These are advanced exercises that should be performed only after your dog is able to walk on uneven surfaces with proper weight bearing.

The Benefits:

- Encourages use of affected limb
- Decreases disuse atrophy
- Increases strength
- Rebuilds lost muscle mass
- Improves ROM

The How to's:

1) Uphill and Downhill:

Use a SHORT LEAD walk SLOWLY up the hill. Make sure to closely observe that your dog is bearing weight on the affected leg. The slower you walk, the more likely your dog will put weight on it. Do the same while going down hill.

2) Walking Sideways:

Bring your dog halfway up the hill and stop. Turn and face the dog so the affected leg is closer to the bottom of the hill. Let your dog stand in this position for a minute or so before beginning the walk. Keep your dog on a SHORT lead and SLOWLY walk across the hill.



The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol. Perform the horizontal walking exercise only after your dog is accomplished at going up and down the hill several times.

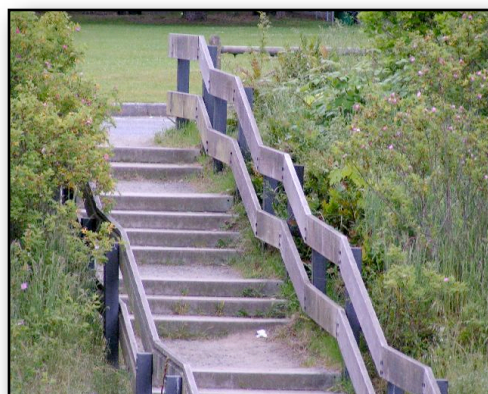
Stairs

The Indications:

Utilizing stairs as a therapeutic exercise can be extremely beneficial. At the same time, incorporating them too early post-op can also be dangerous and compromise your dog's recovery. Incorporating stairs into therapy should only be done after your dog is consistently and confidently using the limb during walking. Similar to the Sit-to-Stand exercise, climbing stairs utilizes all the major hind leg muscle groups. It also works on extension and flexion of the hind limbs.

The Benefits:

- Strengthens and builds muscle mass of all major hind leg muscle groups
- Improves flexibility
- Improves overall ROM



The How to's:

Whether you are utilizing stairs inside your home, in your apartment building, or outside at the park it is going to be extremely important to have full control of your dog. Using the same techniques as the short controlled leash walks, you are going to walk up the stairs alongside your dog. Initially, attention should be on proper placement and comfort level of the affected leg.

WARNING

At no time should your dog be allowed to go up or down the stairs without supervision. When you are not there to help, the stairs should remain off limits. It is very easy for a dog to slip, fall and re-injure himself. Your dog should also not be allowed to “barrel” up and down the stairs. If your dog cannot be controlled walking up or down the stairs then do not perform this exercise.

The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol.

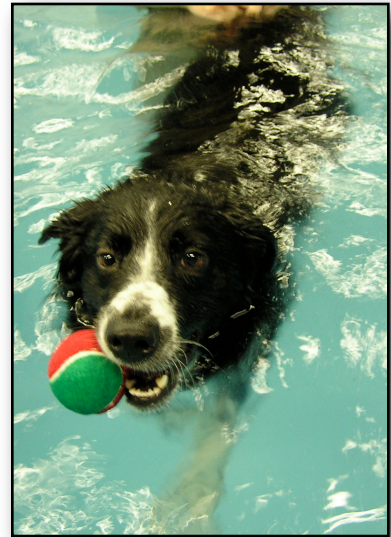
Swimming

The Indications:

Swimming is a fantastic overall exercise. It is very beneficial to the cardiovascular system, increases muscle strength and girth, improves ROM, and helps with weight loss. All this and it does it in a no-impact environment! Water is very soothing to muscles as well. However, swimming does have a larger impact on the joint flexion and ROM than walking on a surface. For this reason, swimming should not be performed until week 8-12 of your dog's recovery and/or until your veterinarian approves this exercise.

The Benefits:

- Increases muscle strength/girth
- Increases ROM
- Increases flexion/extension
- Increases cardiovascular strength
- Is very soothing to muscles and joints
- Provides a form of no impact exercise



The How to's:

Swimming can be performed as long as your veterinarian approves it in a controlled environment. This should be done in a pool and under direct supervision. Your dog should be lifted into and out of the body of water and held in place or allowed to swim with assistance for about 2-5 minutes. Your dog should not be allowed to jump into or out of water to swim. Your local canine rehabilitation facility is a great place to perform this exercise. Keep in mind that in the beginning, your dog may only be able to swim steadily for 2 or so minutes. Swimming is a hard exercise; do not overdo it at first!

The How Many's:

See the week-by-week protocol.

Balance and Proprioception Exercises

Balance and proprioception are two closely related concepts. **Balance** is your dog's ability to keep his/her body weight centered over its base of support. If too much weight is displaced away from the center of its body, your dog can lose its balance and possibly fall down.

Proprioception, on the other hand, is the dog's ability to know what position/ orientation his/her legs and paws are in when standing and walking. Through a series of complicated neurologic connections, small sensors located within the joints relay messages to the brain about where the forelimbs and hind limbs are at all times. The brain then controls the muscles to help move the legs in order keep the body balanced. In humans, intact proprioception decreases the likelihood of us tripping, falling, and even twisting our ankles.

Proprioception losses in dogs can lead to slight dragging of the limb when trying to walk, tripping, decreased coordination, or improperly placing the foot down when stepping. Proprioception is usually diminished after surgery because the dog is not putting the injured leg down on the ground normally.

Activities that challenge your dog's balance are important for retraining proprioception as well. The surgically repaired leg will not only grow stronger as weight is placed onto it, but will also learn to sense what type of surfaces the foot is standing on. Although these exercises may *look* simple, they are actually quite challenging for your dog.

The Benefits:

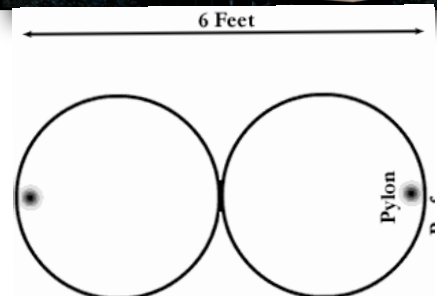
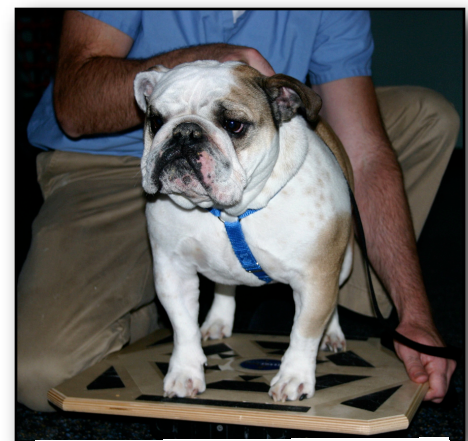
- Increases proprioception for standing and walking properly
- Increases balance
- Increases coordination
- Encourages limb use
- Indirectly increases strength and stability of the limb

The How to's:

- 1) **Figure 8's:**
On a leash, slowly walk your dog in a Figure 8 pattern. This will encourage weight shifting to both sides, and challenge balance reactions when the Figure 8 turns are performed. Start with very wide turns and over time, tighten the turns.
- 2) **Outdoor Obstacles:**
Use your imagination with this one, e.g., walking over tree branches, walking on mulch instead of grass, walking on gravel, etc.

The How Many's:

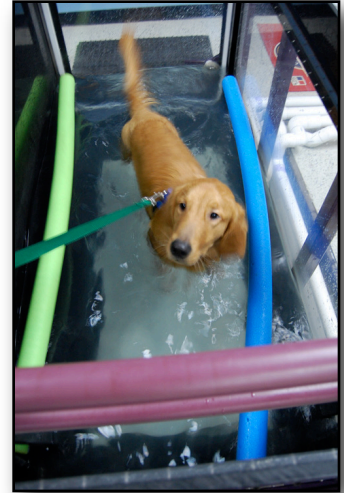
See the week-by-week protocol



Additional Rehabilitation Modalities

Underwater Treadmill:

Underwater Treadmill Therapy provides the ability to strengthen muscles while minimizing stress on the joints and bones through the buoyancy of the water. In addition to building and strengthening muscles, the warm water environment helps to increase overall flexibility and range of motion. There is a tremendous amount of variability to with an underwater treadmill, including speed, water depth, jet resistance, and adjustable incline.



Current Pool Swimming:

Swimming builds physical strength and cardiovascular stamina without adding stress to arthritic and injured joints and tendons. Swimming prevents disuse muscle atrophy and is extremely beneficial for improving joint mobility and health.

Electrical Stimulation:

Electrical Stimulation (E-Stim) is the delivery of low level electrical current, which results in muscle contraction, and stimulation of superficial nerve fibers. E-Stim is used therapeutically for pain management, to prevent muscle atrophy post surgery or injury and to increase muscle strength. It is also used for neuromuscular regeneration.



Therapeutic Ultrasound:

Therapeutic ultrasound is the use of sound waves for deep tissue healing. This is great for musculoskeletal injuries including joint motion limiting conditions, chronic arthritis, and various soft tissue injuries such as muscle strains, muscle tears or tendon injuries. The benefits are increased localized circulation, increased range of motion, increased wound healing time, decreased scar tissue, and decreased inflammation and pain.

Agility Course Work:

A variety of other modalities is often utilized for strengthening and balance/proprioceptive exercises such as balance boards, wobble boards, ladders, cavaletti poles, thera-bands and land treadmills.





Home Therapy Booklet Worksheet

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.