



Post-Operative Instructions: Intervertebral Disc Disease

Summary:

Thank you for trusting your pet to our surgical care. A hemilaminectomy (surgical removal of the side of the bone encasing the spinal cord) was performed to remove the ruptured disc material that was causing compression to your pet's spinal cord and the resultant neurologic signs. Despite the decompression of the spinal cord, it will take time for your pet's recovery from spinal trauma and surgery. Most patients make dramatic neurologic improvement within 6-8 weeks of surgery. It is essential to allow your pet time to heal and to avoid re-injury during recuperation. Please strictly follow the instructions below.

Recovery Instructions:

1. Activity:

- No running, jumping, free access to stairs, or rough playing with other pets or children.
- Do not allow any unrestricted or off-leash activity, or free access to stairs or slippery floors.
- Restrict activity for the next 8 weeks to allow complete healing of the surgical site.
- Activity must be limited to very short leash walks three times daily for the purpose of going outside to the bathroom only. This provides just enough time to allow him/her to urinate and defecate, and then allow you to return him/her to the designated confined area.
- Use a belly sling to support your pet until he/she can walk at near-normal standards. A bath towel looped under his/her abdomen works well to provide this support.
- Monitor the top of your pet's paws for abrasions from dragging and scuffing. You may need to place socks or booties on his/her feet until such time as he/she is able to walk with increased coordination. Remove the boots while your pet is inside or inactive so that moisture isn't trapped against the skin, which could cause irritation or infection.

2. Incision:

- Monitor the incision daily for signs of infection such as increased redness, swelling or discharge. If you observe any of these signs or if the surgical site suddenly becomes painful to the touch please call us immediately.
- Keep the incision clean and dry (do not apply anything to the incision). No bathing or swimming for 14 days.

3. Medications:

- Give all medications as directed and call us if you believe your pet is having an adverse reaction to any of the prescriptions.

4. Food:

- Your pet should have access to water at all times and eat his/her normal diet.

5. Recovery:

- Your pet should show steady, continual improvement. If he/she seems lethargic, acutely painful, simply not doing well, or declining neurologically please call us immediately.
- It is important that you monitor your pet carefully to ensure he/she is urinating at least once every 24 hours. Please seek immediate care if your pet is not urinating.

6. Bladder Expression:

- In the early stages of recovery from a ruptured intervertebral disc, your pet may require manual bladder expression. To express his/her urinary bladder, place your hands on either side of his/her abdomen and apply gradual pressure inward and downward. Express the bladder 3-5 times daily. If you have difficulty performing this procedure, please return to our facility or to your family veterinarian for assistance on a daily basis until your pet no longer requires help.
- If your pet's urinary bladder is not expressed on a daily basis, he/she may develop a medical condition called bladder atony. This occurs when the muscle of the bladder weakens from overfilling and, even when proper neurologic function resumes, the bladder may be too weak to properly contract.
- It is imperative that your pet's bladder is successfully expressed daily to prevent development of a urinary tract infection from residual urine remaining in the bladder. If your pet's urine appears dark in coloration, has a foul odor or you are having trouble expressing the bladder please call us immediately.

7. Physical Therapy

- Perform standing exercises 3-5 times daily for 5-10 minutes each session. To perform these exercises, assist your pet to stand on all four limbs and provide support as needed to encourage him/her to stand on the hind limbs.
- Perform passive range-of-motion exercises 3-5 times daily for 5-10 minutes each session. To perform these exercises, gently flex and extend your pet's hind limbs in a bicycling motion.

8. Recheck:

- Please schedule an appointment for suture/staple removal 10-12 days after surgery.
- Please schedule a second appointment in 6-8 weeks for a neurologic reassessment; based on your pet's neurologic status at that time, we will make further recommendations regarding activity. If your pet is having any difficulties or not improving then a recheck examination may need to be scheduled sooner.

9. Questions:

- Our foremost interest is your pet's rapid and complete recovery: Do not hesitate to call if you have any questions or concerns.