

Fracture Repair Recovery Guide

1 Introduction

So your pet has just suffered a fracture and needs surgery. What can we do to fix the limb and promote rapid and effective healing?

The first step is surgery - we will put the fractured bone back in it's normal position and then use metal implants (a combination of plates, screws, pins and wires) to keep it there. Over a period of 8-12 weeks, the bone will heal, providing a stable and permanent fixation.

While the bone is healing we need to be very careful to make sure that no excessive force or trauma is placed on the bone or the implants supporting it which could lead to further damage to the bone or failure of the implants. What steps do we need to take to allow good healing to take place? The most important things are strict rest, a nutritious diet and keeping your pet under control.

2 Aftercare

The best way to ensure good healing is to keep your pet under control at all times until the fracture is healed and the bone has knitted together. Before your dog comes home, you should determine where you are going to confine them during this post-surgery period;

- A dog crate that is large enough that they can stand up and turn around comfortably.
- Confinement to a small room eg. utility room.
- A cordoned off area of a larger room.

Any time your dog is out of this confined area, they should be on a lead so that you always have control over their movements.

Surfaces such as wooden floors, tile etc. can be very slippery. We suggest that you place some rugs with rubber backing or yoga mats on these surfaces to make it easier for your dog to walk around.

Do's	Don'ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Take your dog on short lead walks outside to go to the toilet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow your dog to jump up and down from couches or beds.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use cool packs on the fracture site for first 3-5 days to help reduce swelling . 5 minutes a time, twice a day will do the trick 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow any active play, off lead walks or play with other dogs until at x-rays show full healing of the fracture. (Usually 8-12 weeks)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Try some physio and rehab exercises to improve your pets recovery. See our separate rehab guide for more details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allow your pet to lick or rub at the wound. Use the buster collar provided at all times until the wound is healed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contact your vet if you have any concerns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Let your dog use stairs for the first 3-4 weeks. 1 or 2 steps outside when on a lead is fine though.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Follow all bandage care instructions carefully if your pet has a bandage following surgery 	

After the surgery, your dog is going to limp on the surgically repaired leg for a period of time. This is because your dog has lost muscle, the leg is weaker and may get sore from exercise as you progress through your program. Your dog should be placing some weight on the surgical leg (even just touching toes to the floor) within 7 days from the date of the surgery, though many dogs will use the leg within a day or two.

The lameness should only improve as time goes on. If you see a deterioration in your dog's lameness then please contact your vet, particularly if they become non-weight bearing suddenly.



Wound Care

Your pet will have dissolvable sutures placed in the surgical incision, these won't be visible from the outside and do not need to be removed. We recommend that your vet or nurse examines the wound 7-10 days after surgery to ensure the healing process is going well.

Licking introduces bacteria to the area and, in severe cases, can cause infection to not only the incision, but to the bone itself. This type of complication can delay the healing significantly and potentially do permanent damage to the leg.

Infection due to licking is the most common complication following orthopaedic surgery and is completely preventable

<u>Normal</u>	<u>Abnormal</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Swelling around the incision and the surgical leg for the first week.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Swelling that lasts longer than a week
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Bruising of the leg	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Discharge that is not clear or any discharge after the first 3 days
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● A small amount of clear or blood-tinged discharge from the incision for the first few days only	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Discomfort that continues after pain medications and cold packs, especially if causing your pet to cry out or bite.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Mild discomfort around the incision and the leg itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Any deterioration in your pet's lameness as time goes on.

Timeline for recovery

Below is an average timetable for your dog's recovery. Not every dog will heal at the same rate, some dogs may not be able for the longer walks as the weeks go on, so you can reduce the length of walks to suit your dog but do not increase them above the recommended length.

We may recommend a quicker or slower return to normal exercise based on the type of fracture and other factors such as your pets age or breed. Walks should be at a slow pace, on a relatively flat surface with good grip and should be of a duration that your pet is comfortable using the leg for the entire walk.

Please see our Rehabilitation Guide for more info on rehab exercises you can do to improve your pets recovery.

<u>Stage</u>	<u>Exercise Level</u>	<u>Additional Rehab</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 0-3 days post-op 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2-5 minutes lead walk outside to toilet. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cold packs on surgical site for 5 minutes twice a day Keep any bandage clean and dry during walks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3-10 days post-op 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 minutes lead walk outside to toilet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Start passive-range of motion (PROM) exercises Massage of leg
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CHECK UP 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> APPOINTMENT WITH 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YOUR VET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10 days to 8 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build up length of lead walks Add 3 minutes twice a day to length of walk every week until doing 20 minutes twice daily. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> PROM exercises Sit-to-stand (week 3) 3-legged stands (week 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8 WEEKS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> POST-OP X-RAYS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> WITH YOUR VET
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8-12 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to increase length of walks by 5 minutes per week until back at normal levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stair climbing Trotting/running (week 8) Swimming