



Physical Therapy after Cruciate Ligament Repair

The following is your homework! PLEASE follow these exercises to help your dog recover as much use of the operated leg as possible!

1. The first 14 days after surgery (starting on day 1)

a. **Cold Therapy:** Helps soothe pain and decrease inflammation

Use ice or frozen peas or corn (not a “cold pack” – they aren’t cold enough!) and apply directly to skin or in a pillow case, nothing thicker.

Make sure to cool all areas of the knee – the outside where the incision is, the front, and the inside.

Ice for 15 minutes at least 3-4 times a day and after PROM.

b. **Passive Range of Motion (PROM):** Stimulates blood flow, speeds healing, and prevents muscle atrophy.

Move the entire leg through the motion of pedaling a bike with one hand just above foot and the other hand above the incision. Repeat 15-20 times 2-3 times daily. Take your pet just to his/her maximum comfort level, but not beyond. See a video demonstration at www.ellicottvets.com under videos.



- c. **Massage:** Stimulates blood flow and prevents scar tissue within muscles.
Apply deep pressure to the quadriceps and hamstring muscles (large muscle groups at the front and rear of the thigh). Start at the knee and move up toward the hip. Massage for 2-3 minutes before and after PROM.
- d. **Walking:** Helps maintain strength.
SLOW and CONTROLLED walking (not trotting) on a leash 5-10 minutes twice a day. Walk on level surfaces, avoiding hills and steps at first.

2. Weeks 2-4

- a. Continue PROM and massage.
- b. Increase length of walks gradually to 15-20 minutes twice daily by week 4. Stay slow and controlled!
- c. Ice after PROM and walks.

3. Weeks 5-8

- a. Continue slow, controlled leash walks. Gradually increase to 20-30 minutes per walk. Add the following while walking to build strength:
 - 1. Walk your dog in a figure 8 pattern to the left and right. Start with a large figure 8 and walk the pattern 5 times in one direction before changing to the other direction. Over 3-4 weeks gradually tighten the figure 8 and switch directions more frequently.
 - 2. Do sit-to-stand exercises. Stand your dog alongside a wall with the operated leg against the wall and ask him to sit and then to stand several seconds later. Try to prevent your dog from walking forward when standing up to make this more difficult. Start with 3-4 repetitions 2-3 times a day and build to 10 reps.
- b. Continue PROM, massage, and ice.

4. After the second month add some of the following:

- a. Continue all above exercises for strength and range of motion.
- b. Add uphill, snow or grass to walks.
- c. Slowly go up and down stairs
- d. Set up a line of cones or obstacles and zig-zag through them.
- e. Incorporate balance exercises by having your dog walk over couch cushions on the floor.
- f. Use leg weights wrapped around both ankles (even if only one leg had surgery) and have your dog walk around for 2-3 minutes at a time.
- g. After 2 months, you may allow short periods of off-leash activity while supervised.

The above exercises should become a part of your dog's normal routine forever to help keep strong and flexible, and maintain comfortable mobility!