

## TPLO Discharge Instructions

The Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy has been successful at restoring comfortable hind limb function after an appropriate healing period. Complications that may arise include: incisional infection, dehiscence (opening of the incision), seroma formation (sterile fluid under the incision), implant failure, screw loosening, patellar ligament desmitis (tendonitis), and tibial fractures.

The meniscus is the cartilage within the knee that acts like acquisition between the femur and tibia. Dogs with meniscal tears will have a faster progression of osteoarthritis compared to dogs with a normal meniscus at the time of surgery.

Dogs with cruciate tears can develop meniscus tears even after a TPLO. Some dogs will develop meniscus tears months to years after surgery.

40-60% of patients with a cruciate tear will tear the contralateral cruciate.

In most cases, the implants remain in place for the remainder of the pets life. In a small percentage of cases implant removal is needed if the plate is causing complications. If the implants fail (screw loosening, plate fracture, or screws breaking) additional surgery may be required.

Please follow the instructions below to decrease the incidence of potential complications:

### **INCISION CARE:**

A Hypafix bandage was placed after surgery. Try to leave this on for 24 hours.

- Please monitor the incision for dehiscence (opening) or any signs of infection including redness, swelling, heat, and discharge. If you see any of these signs, please contact your primary care veterinarian.
- Do not allow your pet to bother the incision site (lick, scratch, or rub). Your pet should wear an Elizabethan Collar at all times when not directly supervised until the incision is healed and sutures or staples are removed. Failure to follow this recommendation could lead to complications at your pets incision site.
- Do not allow the incision to get wet (no baths or swimming) until the incision is healed.
- Skin sutures or staples, if present, will need to be removed in 10-14 days.
- You may continue to ice your pets incision site 3-4 times daily for 10-15 minutes each time for the next 3 days to decrease postoperative pain and inflammation. Always place a protective layer, such as a thin towel, between the ice pack and your pets skin.
- After 3 days, you may switch to a warm compress 3-5 times daily for 3-5 more days if the surgical site appears bruised, painful, or swollen. Always test the warm pack to make sure it is not too hot and place a protective layer, such as a think towel, between the warm pack and your pets skin.

**ALLOWING YOUR PET TO LICK THE INCISION, EVEN FOR SHORT PERIODS, SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASES THE RISKS OF INCISION COMPLICATION AND INFECTION.**

**EXERCISE RESTRICTION:**

Your pet should be confined to a kennel or small room when not directly supervised for the next two weeks. When not in a kennel or small room, they should be on a leash and directly supervised. In many cases, sedation may be required to keep your pet calm and compliant in their kennel. Please discuss this with your primary veterinarian if you feel your pet is becoming anxious or stressed.

- Weeks 1-2:
  - No running, jumping, playing with other pets, or uncontrolled off leash activities are allowed
  - Your pet should be allowed to go out only for urination and defecation 3-4 times daily and should always be on a leash.
  - During the first two weeks your pet can be taken on a short leash walk. This should be limited to 5-10 minutes. Walk the pet slow enough that they use the affected leg with each step.
- Weeks 3-8:
  - If the incision is healed you can increase the length of the leash walks to 20-30 minutes 2-3 times daily.
  - Still no uncontrolled activity: No running, jumping, or playing with other pets.
  - Confinement to a small room or kennel is still recommended
  - All outside activity should be on a leash
- Weeks 9-12:
  - If your pet is doing well at the 8 week recheck, and radiographs show a healed osteotomy, you can increase the activity level over 3-4 weeks until your pet is back to their normal activity.
  - Keeping them in a kennel is no longer needed.
  - They can SLOWLY have more time to run, jump, or play. Start with a few minutes of unrestricted activity and add a few minutes each day until they are back to their normal level.
  - Leash walks can be continued but there is no duration limit

**INADEQUATE RESTRICTION OF ACTIVITY IS A COMMON CAUSE OF POSTOPERATIVE COMPLICATION AND INCREASED VETERINARY COSTS.**

**REHABILITATION:**

**START THE DAY AFTER SURGERY**

Rehabilitation sessions for post operative orthopedic patients are very important. Passive range of motion can help retain a good range of motion in their joints.

Lay your pet down with the affected leg up. Gently and slowly flex the toes until there is minimal resistance. At this point hold the toes in flexion for 1-2 seconds, then extend their toes until there is minimal resistance and hold them there for 1-2 seconds. Repeat these procedures 10-15 times then move up to their ankle, knee, and hip and repeat the flexion and extension in a

similar manner for 10-15 repetitions. You can also move their leg in a bicycle motion forwards and backwards for 1 minute. Afterwards, take them on a very slow leash walk for 5-10 minutes. After these exercises your pet may be a little sore. You can ice the limb by applying a bag of ice or frozen vegetables to their stifle. It should stay on for 5-10 minutes. Ensure that you are using a protective layer, such as a thin towel, between the skin and the ice.

Some dogs may require more intensive physical therapy. Please contact the clinic below and schedule an evaluation if you would like to pursue rehabilitation:

**Dr. Rick Wall, DVM, DACVSMR, CCRP, DAAPM**  
Center for Veterinary Pain Management and Rehabilitation  
281-298-5509  
[www.vetrehabcenter.com](http://www.vetrehabcenter.com)

Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists  
713-693-1111  
[www.gcvcs.com/service/rehabilitation-fitness](http://www.gcvcs.com/service/rehabilitation-fitness)

Texas A&M Veterinary Teaching Hospital  
979-845-2351  
[www.vethospital.tamu.edu](http://www.vethospital.tamu.edu)

#### **DIET:**

Your pet can resume their normal diet. If they are not interested in their regular diet, you can try plain white rice, chicken breasts (unseasoned), and/or cottage cheese

#### **MONITORING:**

- Your pet should gradually increase the amount of weight that they put on the affected leg. They should be using their leg consistently within the first 5-7 days. If they are not using this leg consistently within this time period please call your primary care veterinarian so they can re-evaluate them.
- Your pet may have a decreased appetite following anesthesia and surgery. This is not unusual and is often due to the pain medications and stress of hospitalization. Please monitor your pet's appetite and call your primary care veterinarian if they are not eating in the next few days.
- Anesthesia and pain medication can cause constipation. It is not unusual for pets to go several days without a bowel movement.

**You may notice swelling in the area of the ankle 2-3 days after surgery. This is normal because the swelling that is at the surgery site post operatively will move down the leg due to gravity**

#### **MEDICATIONS:**

**Your pet received an injection of Nocita at the incision site. This is a long lasting local anesthetic that will help keep them comfortable for the first 72 hours after surgery.**

**The most common medications used after surgery are anti-inflammatories and antibiotics. Please follow the directions provided by your veterinarian.**

Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory drugs, or NSAIDs, are used to treat post operative pain and inflammation. They are typically given for 10-14 days following surgery. Side effects include vomiting, diarrhea, and decreased appetite. If you notice any of these signs or dark, tarry stools please discontinue the medication and call your primary veterinarian. If your pet has been on any NSAID or steroid make sure to tell your veterinarian. **GIVING MORE THAN ONE TYPE OF NSAID, SUDDENLY SWITCHING FROM ONE NSAID TO ANOTHER, OR GIVING NSAIDS AND STEROIDS AT THE SAME TIME CAN SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE THE RISK OF SIDE EFFECTS.**

Antibiotics can help decrease the risk of infection but will not replace proper incision care. Most antibiotics are given for 7-10 days following surgery. Just like their use in people, not giving the correct dose or not finishing the course may lead to resistance.

**RECHECKS:**

Your pet needs to have their incision checked in 10-14 days. Sutures or staples, if present, will be removed at that time and your veterinarian will evaluate your pet's progress. Please call your primary veterinarian for scheduling.

Re-evaluation is required 8 weeks after surgery. Radiographs will be taken at this time to assess bone healing. Please call your primary veterinarian for an appointment.

**THANK YOU FOR TRUSTING WITH YOUR PETS CARE!**

Houston Mobile Veterinary Services