

## **Post operative care after neurological surgery (Incontinent)**

### **Exercise**

Your pet may be **incontinent** as a result of the neurologic injury. General nursing care is important to prevent scalding of urine and feces until he/she recovers. Try to keep your pet in a well-padded area on a surface that is easy to clean. Generally a crate or blocked off area in the kitchen, garage or bathroom will work best. Check your pet daily for abrasions and scalding around his/her bottom and inner thighs. You can wash him/her off as necessary in the tub. After 2-3 days do not worry about getting the incision wet-there is a good seal on it. You may need to apply some Desitin diaper rash cream to the affected area. You can purchase this cream from any pharmacy.

It is generally safe to pick your pet up; a technician can give you advice if you are unsure. Large dogs that cannot be carried will need to be supported by forming a sling with a towel and placing it in front of the hind legs to support him/her.

Once your pet begins to walk you can let him/her do more in the house. Be careful to block off any stairs to avoid them from getting into trouble. Continue to use a leash when taking him/her outside so that they do not try to run around too much. Once you judge that your pet is walking 90-95% of normal, you can allow resumption of normal activity.

Do not confuse the presence of urine in the cage/blanket with an ability to urinate. All this means is that urine is overflowing from the bladder. It is important to try and express the bladder 2-3 times daily to minimize stretching of the bladder. You can do this by pressing on the abdomen with both hands, while supporting your pet. You have to press quite firmly to do this and it is quite difficult. Once your pet appears to be consciously urinating (i.e. voids when taken outside), you can then stop expressing the bladder. One of the technicians or your veterinarian at the hospital can show you how to do this. Male dogs as a rule are harder to express than females. Do not be discouraged if you cannot express your dog's bladder. He/she will hopefully recover quickly enough that it will not affect the long-term outcome.

### **Time frame for recovery**

Dogs take a long time to recover from neurologic injury. One of the first things to return (fortunately) is ability to consciously urinate and defecate; followed by the ability to move the hind legs, then the ability to walk. Generally, most patients improve in 2-4 weeks and recover by 8-10 weeks after surgery. Some patients will remain wobbly (ataxic) on the hind legs for a long time or permanently as a result of the injury.

### **Wound care**

The incision and associated surgery site may become swollen over the next few days. In

addition, you will notice bruising that may become very dark red, and spreads away from the skin incision. All this is normal.

You should become concerned that your pet may have an infection IF:

A: the wound becomes very swollen or discharges a yellow or green material

B: your dog suddenly stops using the leg or becomes very depressed or lethargic

If these signs occur, contact us at 813 901 5100.

Sometimes the wound will ooze some blood during the first 24-48 hours at home. You should not be alarmed at this. You can hold a cotton sponge over it for 5-10 minutes to stop the bleeding. If necessary, you can clean the wound with cotton sponges and warm water or a little hydrogen peroxide at the skin edges, being careful not to get it in the wound. Hydrogen peroxide in the wound can cause some minor irritation.