



# Arthroscopy Rehabilitation

## The patient should be confined for the first 6 to 8 weeks following surgery.

Any type of joint arthroscopy requires a period of complete rest during the immediate post operative period in order to achieve the best outcome. It is **CRITICAL** that your dog NOT be allowed any type of OFF-LEASH activity during the first SIX (6) weeks post operatively. During the arthroscopy procedure, the joint is evaluated, damaged cartilage is removed (abrasion chondroplasty), bone fragments or chips are also removed if present, and small punctures are sometimes placed into the underlying bone of the joint surface (microfracture) to stimulate formation of repair cartilage (fibrocartilage). This new repair cartilage requires time to consolidate and adhere to the joint surface - much like a scab forms on a skin wound. In an ideal world, there should be no weight bearing across the joint in order to allow the best healing to occur. This is not possible with companion animals, however, because dogs will not walk on crutches for 8 weeks in order to avoid placing weight on their injured joint. Therefore, it becomes the responsibility of the dog's owner to minimize the amount of weight that is placed across the injured joint by limiting the pet's activity. If you allow your dog to be too active too soon, there is great risk that these tissues have not healed completely and the success of the procedure could be jeopardized. Please **AVOID** stairs and slick floors during this time period. Allow short and controlled walks for bathroom duties only (>5 minutes). The following physical therapy exercises are also helpful to maintain mobility and flexibility in the joint during this time of inactivity.

### FIRST 6-8 WEEKS POST ARTHROSCOPY

1. Passive Range of Motion (PROM) of the affected joint(s)
  - a. 10 SLOW reps 3 times/day
  - b. Flex and extend the joint to the point of resistance or mild discomfort
2. Follow PROM with massage of the muscles around the joint.
3. Short walks on a leash as noted above
4. No explosive activity

### AFTER 8 WEEK REST PERIOD

1. For most joint operations, healing will be complete by this time and a more rigorous activity schedule can be allowed **BUT PLEASE** consult with your doctor before allowing unrestricted activity.
2. Joint strengthening activities include:
  - Incline walking (going up)= hills, ramps, etc.
  - Stairs (going up)- slowly (5 to 10 flights) 2 times/day
  - Tug-of-war
  - Swimming and other forms of hydrotherapy
  - Longer controlled on-leash, and off-leash running

**Please call with any questions or concerns.**