

Home Exercise Program – Cranial cruciate ligament injury

While your pet is waiting to have surgery or if you are considering conservative management, here are some guidelines for what you can do at home to help increase knee range of motion, improve muscle function and to help with pain management.

Note: running, jumping, rough playing, and ball fetching will all exacerbate your pet’s pain and increase swelling in the affected knee and should be eliminated as much as possible.

Passive range of motion exercise: *perform in the morning to warm up the knee*

Extension/Flexion: Hold knee in **extension (photo on left)** 5-10 seconds, relax 3 seconds; then hold knee in **flexion (photo on right)** 5-10 seconds, relax 3 seconds; repeat 3-5 times



Active range of motion/muscle activation exercises: *do all exercises below or pick only 2 or 3 as tolerated, once daily*

Rub tummy to encourage pet to actively extend knee; 2 minutes or longer as tolerated



Pinch toes (alternating each leg) in side lying so your pet actively flexes knee; 2 minutes or longer as tolerated



Front feet on steps or couch to extend and strengthen back legs; hold position 2 to 5 minutes



Square sitting practice – feet under body with no side sitting (with or without pillow under rump if pet can't go all the way down); allow to stand and sit again; 3 times



Leashed walking (no flexi-leads): up to 3 times a day during potty breaks

Start with up to 5 minutes of walking if tolerated and increasing time by 3 – 5 minutes per week if no increase in pain or limping

Pain management and decreasing joint swelling:

Joint compressions Place pet lying on side with affected side up. One hand stabilizes above the knee and the other hand stabilizes below the ankle. With the knee in a slightly extended, normal weight bearing position, apply a gentle compression through the tibia so that the hands are moving toward each other in a quick, rhythmical fashion for 2 minutes up to 3 times a day (*this should be soothing to your pet; if not, do not perform*).



Icing – 5 – 20 minutes as tolerated especially after walks (up to 3 times a day)



Medications: ask your veterinarian for refills as needed

Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory pain medication such as carprofen (Rimadyl), firocoxib (Previcox), deracoxib (Deramaxx)

Gabapentin – blunts nerve pain

Trazodone – anti-anxiety medication to help with exercise restriction

Joint supplements: can be found over the counter or through your veterinarian

Omega 3 fish oil (DHA/EPA) is a natural anti-inflammatory:

Dose recommendation is 50 mg/lb of the DHA and EPA combined daily.

Example: a 60 lb dog would receive 3000 mg of combined DHA and EPA of the omega 3 fish oil product

Product recommendations include: Welactin, Omega Benefits (VRS), Nordic naturals

