

Arthrodesis

The operation

Arthrodesis is a salvage procedure, indicated for patients with acute or chronic instability of the joint, irreparable fractures or ligament trauma near the joint, or chronic and painful osteoarthritis.

The procedure involves removal of the cartilage, and stabilisation of the joint with a plate and screws. A bone graft is then placed in the area of the joint, enabling bones to fuse together.

Joints that can be treated with arthrodesis include the carpus (wrist), tarsus (hock), stifle (knee), shoulder and elbow.

Post-operative care



Wound care - If stitches are present, these should be removed 10-14 days after the operation. Monitor the surgical site twice daily, and contact your vet if you notice any discharge or swelling.



Follow-up care - Six and twelve weeks after the operation, follow-up radiographs will be taken. This allows us to evaluate the fusion of the joint, and make sure there are no implant-related complications.

If there are no complications at the 12-week follow-up, a gradual return to exercise is allowed, i.e. a 5-minute twice daily walk for the first week, followed by an additional 5 minutes per walk per week.

A steady progress is expected during this time. If your pet becomes increasingly lame, contact your vet immediately. If there are no concerns once you reach two 30-minute walks per day, your dog can start exercising off-lead.



* The information sheet provided is your guide for post-operative care following arthrodesis. Please read and follow the instructions for the most optimal outcome.

Post-operative care *(continued)*



Exercise restriction - Following an arthrodesis procedure, all patients will require 12 weeks of strict rest.

Cats and small dogs are ideally kept in a crate. Large dogs can be confined to a single room with a non-slippery floor.



Cold and warm therapy - In the first 3 days after the operation, an ice pack wrapped in a towel can be applied to the surgical site, for 15 minutes, 2-3 times daily. This reduces the level of inflammation and discomfort. Some swelling in the area of operation is normal. After the initial 3 days, switch to a warm pack (not too hot!) for 4 weeks. This stimulates the blood flow to the surgical site, and stimulates healing of the tissues.



Diet - It is advised to reduce the caloric intake by about 20% during the initial 12 weeks after the operation. Drastic changes in the type of food offered should be avoided.



Medication - Your dog will be discharged with a combination of anti-inflammatory and antibiotics. It is important to follow the instructions. Any vomiting, diarrhoea or other changes should be reported to your vet immediately.



Following orthopaedic operations

Following orthopaedic operations, the majority of pets are expected to start putting some weight down with the operated leg within 2-3 days. Near complete weight-bearing is expected around 4 weeks after the operation.

If your pet is not making the expected progress, please contact your vet.

If any of these exercises seem to make your dog lame, stop them immediately and contact your vet.

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Following this advice should help your pet recover quickly however if you have any questions please contact your veterinary practice.