

Description: The anterior cruciate ligament (cranial cruciate ligament) is a knee ligament that may be torn or ruptured during sudden stopping or twisting movements. The resulting ligament instability causes lameness, pain, and ultimately leads to degenerative arthritis in the knee. Surgical intervention with the extracapsular suture stabilization recreates an artificial ligament in the knee to stabilize the joint.

Indications: There are different types of surgical procedures used to repair ruptured anterior cruciate ligament injuries. An extracapsular suture stabilization procedure is best indicated for cats and small dogs. Animals of this size are less likely to strain or damage the surgical repair as opposed to large dogs that are more likely to stretch or break the sutures. Conformation of the tibial bone is also used to determine which stabilization procedure will work best for an individual patient. Certain tibial deformities place excessive stress on the anterior cruciate ligament, making suture stabilization less effective even in smaller patients.

Postoperative Care

Medication: Pain medication is generally only required for the first 10 to 14 days following surgery. Give pain medication only as prescribed and do not give human drugs without first consulting with a veterinarian.

Exercise: The long-term success of the procedure depends largely on allowing the leg to rest and heal. Your pet should be confined to a clean, quiet, enclosed area such as a kennel, crate, or small room. Exercise should consist of short walks outdoors only for elimination purposes on a leash. No running or jumping should be allowed for at least two months. Following bandage removal, passive range-of-motion physical therapy is advised to help maintain joint flexibility. If possible, swimming is also helpful after the first four weeks, but check with the surgeon first. Remember, there is a lot of variation with respect to how soon animals will use the leg following surgery; just because your pet “feels” like running on the leg does not mean that the joint is strong enough to support such vigorous activity.

Incision Care: In most cases, your pet will not go home with a bandage, so it is important to keep an eye on the incision site. Some mild redness, swelling and bruising is expected, and should go away within a week or so of surgery. Evaluate the incision daily for discharge, excessive swelling, opening of the incision or increased redness, as these signs can be an indication that additional treatments are required. It is very important to use an e-collar to prevent your pet from licking, pulling, or scratching at the incision.

Recommended follow-up: Please schedule an appointment for suture removal 7 to 10 days after surgery. In addition, please contact us immediately if;

1. Any unusual swelling is noted
2. Discharge of the incision site exists
3. Any increase in lameness is noted after pet was starting to improve
4. Limping is noticed on any of the other legs

A follow-up radiographic examination is advised 6 weeks after surgery to assess bone healing. Further follow-up may be advised depending on the rate of bone healing.

Prognosis: The prognosis for improved function following suture stabilization is good for most small dogs and cats and fair for large dogs. Extremely active patients are more likely to stretch the repair and have continued lameness and progression of arthritis. Your pet’s recovery and well-being are our primary concerns, so do not hesitate to call and speak with a surgical technician or surgeon if there are any questions regarding your pet’s recovery.

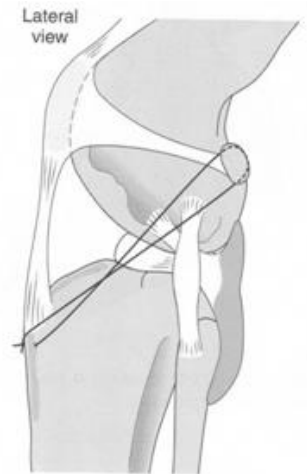


Figure 1: Fossum, T., & Duprey, L. (1997). Small Animal Surgery (p. 694). St. Louis: Mosby-Year Book, Inc., Fig 30-69