



**Description:** An elbow arthrotomy is a surgical incision into the elbow joint made in order to visualize and surgically repair problems of the joint.

**Indications:** An elbow arthrotomy is primarily used to treat osteochondritis dissecans (OCD) of the elbow, fragmented coronoid process, or ununited anconeal process. These elbow diseases are usually diagnosed in young, growing, large breed dogs and are often lumped under the general term “elbow dysplasia.” They are manifested by limping, decreased range of motion of the elbow, pain when the elbow joint is manipulated, and sometimes elbow joint swelling. An arthrotomy is also used in the surgical treatment of joint fractures and luxations.

#### **Postoperative Care**

**Medication:** Pain medication is generally only required for the first 5-7 days following surgery. Give pain medication only as prescribed and do not give human drugs without first consulting with a veterinarian.

**Bandage:** The bandage on your pet’s leg is a soft, padded bandage that controls swelling and provides some support in the early postoperative time. It is not designed to allow running or jumping. The bandage should be checked and/or changed as soon as possible if any of the following are noticed: (1) swelling of the toes occurs, (2) the bandage becomes wet or soiled, (3) the bandage has slipped, or (4) your pet is chewing at the bandage. If your pet has a tendency to chew, then he/she may need an Elizabethan collar designed to prevent chewing. Bandage removal is usually advised three to five days after surgery, but in some cases it may be left on until the time of suture removal.

**Exercise:** Please confine your pet to a quiet, clean area for approximately six weeks following surgery. Short leash walks are acceptable but no running, jumping, or playing with other pets should be allowed.

**Recommended Follow-Up:** Please schedule an appointment for suture removal 7 to 10 days after surgery. In addition, please contact us immediately if problems occur with the bandage, if an increase in lameness is noted, or if the incision becomes red, swollen, or has drainage.

**Prognosis:** The prognosis for elbow arthrotomy depends on the underlying medical condition. Surgical repairs of fractures or luxations generally have a good prognosis, although some arthritis will result from the joint trauma. After fracture healing has occurred, lameness may be evident after heavy exercise. The prognosis for elbow dysplasia depends upon the underlying condition, but surgical intervention generally improves the prognosis and may reduce the degree of long-term arthritis in the limb. Potential complications of an elbow arthrotomy may include incision problems, joint infections, and arthritis in the elbow.

Your pet’s recovery and well-being are our primary concerns, so please do not hesitate to call and speak with a surgical technician or surgeon if there are any questions regarding your pet’s recovery.