



Description: An intra-articular fracture is a fracture that involves the surface of a joint.

Indications: Surgical repair is advised for almost all fractures that involve a joint surface to reduce the amount of arthritis and return the limb to function.

Postoperative Care

Medication: Give any prescribed medication as directed. Do not give human pain medication to pets without first consulting with a veterinarian.

Bandage: If there is a bandage on the limb, it should be checked frequently for problems. 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. The bandage will most likely be removed at the time of suture removal or sooner to allow physical therapy of the joint.

Exercise: Early controlled weight-bearing exercise is encouraged. This means slow walks out on a leash for short periods of time (5-10 minutes). No running, jumping, or playing with other pets should be allowed. Please keep your pet confined to a quiet, confined area for at least two months after surgery or until radiographs show adequate healing. Vigorous activity may lead to breakage or loosening of the implants and sever arthritis.

Physical therapy: Some degree of arthritis is likely to occur in the joint, but its effects can be minimized by proper exercise restriction and physical therapy. Passive range-of-motion exercises should be started on the joint shortly after bandage or suture removal. Perform exercises for 5-10 minutes two to three times daily. Consult with the surgeon after approximately one month postoperatively regarding the advisability of swimming.

Recommended Follow-up: Patients with trauma severe enough to break bones can often have internal injuries as well; sometimes these injuries are not apparent until days or weeks after the incident. Have your pet checked by a veterinarian as soon as possible if any signs of illness such as vomiting, trouble breathing, prolonged inappetence, change in urination, or pale gums are noted. Also schedule a recheck if:

- Swelling or discharge from the incision is noted
- An increase in lameness occurs
- Change in position or angle of the limb is noted
- Bandage problems occur

Please schedule an appointment for suture removal 7 to 10 days after surgery, and follow-up radiographs need to be scheduled approximately one month after surgery.

Prognosis: The prognosis following repair of articular fractures is highly variable depending on the severity of the trauma to the joint. In most cases, return to acceptable function in the limb can be expected, but occasional lameness due to arthritis and some loss of range of motion is common. Implants may sometimes need to be removed after the bone has healed if they are causing irritation in the joint or otherwise contributing to pain.

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.