

Greater Cincinnati Veterinary Specialty & Emergency Services

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Physical Therapy for FHO (hip surgery): 6+ weeks post-operative

1. Single Leg Balancing (Three Leg Standing) & Single leg hopping -

The goal is to encourage your pet to put the healing or affected leg down by lifting up the stronger of the two legs in order to force weight bearing on the recovering limb. Your pet will initially want to shift weight forward to not put weight on the healing leg, but you should shift the weight backwards to encourage weight bearing. Your standing times should be about 2 minutes and you should work up to 5 minutes maximum. As your pet gets stronger, you can start to tip your pet so that they have to hop to the side to catch their balance. This exercise should be done in a location where there is good footing so that your pet will not slip during this exercise. Repeat this 2-3 times each session as your pet improves.

2. Stair Climbing -

Encourage your pet to use each foot, especially the affected leg, correctly during this activity as they walk up the steps. The goal is that your pet does not skip, hop, or hold up the affected leg(s) during this activity. If they will not leave the paw on the floor, then go back to the balancing exercises and try this activity again in a couple of weeks. Start with a short flight of stairs that are 4-6 in number (half of a flight), then you can work up to a full flight of stairs as your pet improves. **Do this exercise for 2-4 repetitions, 1-3 times a day.** Always have your pet on a leash so that you have some control of the speed of stair climbing or your pet will just lift up the leg and run up the stairs.

3. Sit-to-Stand Exercises -

The goal is to have your pet sit correctly during this activity, which means that they should sit squarely with both legs evenly bent. If your pet cannot sit correctly at this time, you may need to do more range of motion exercises before trying this activity, however your pet does not have to be perfect in order to try this exercise. If you have problems, you may need to have your pet sit next to a wall with the affected side toward the wall to encourage appropriate motion of the leg. The eventual goal is that your pet uses both legs equally to stand up. **At this point you should be at 15 - 20 repetitions 3-4 times a day. You can use treats for this activity, however please do not overfeed your pet.**

4. Dancing Exercises:

Depending on the size of your dog, you may either grasp the paws or front legs behind the elbows to help provide for the best support for your pet. With your pet facing you, have them stand on the hind limbs and support the forelimbs against you (similar to if you were trying to dance with a human partner). After they are standing on the back legs, you can start to move your feet around so that your pet follows you as if you are dancing with them. The goal is to have them shift the use of both hind limbs on the floor as they move around with you. Initially start with only a few steps in all directions, then rest. **Work up to this activity for 2-5 minutes 2-3 times a day.** If your pet is small, you can put them between your legs and move with them in all directions while you hold the front paws up (just be careful to move together so that you do not step on a paw).

5. Walking -

Be sure to walk slow enough that your pet is using all four limbs. The leash length can be increased at this time to a longer leash to allow more freedom. The goal is to make your pet better with each step and to make them use each leg with every step. Start with multiple short trips and work up from there: at this time you may be at **10 minutes two to three (2-3) times a day** and you can continue to increase each session by 1-3 minutes every few days as long as your pet is doing well. If your pet is consistently using the leg to walk, you can start to increase the pace (speed) of the walk as your pet improves. If your pet lifts up the leg or skips a few steps with the leg, you should slow the pace down until they are using the leg with each step.