

Greater Cincinnati Veterinary Specialty & Emergency Services

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Physical Therapy for TPLO (Knee Surgery): 0-2 weeks post-operative

1. Warm Compresses (warm up) -

We recommend applying a warm pack to the areas to be worked on for 10 minutes before beginning your rehabilitation session. We do not recommend applying the heat for longer than 15 minutes as it will not have a beneficial effect. **Never apply heat to an area that is inflamed, warm to the touch, or has an open sore**

Home-made warm packs can be made by:

- filling a sock with uncooked (dry) rice
- Tie the sock off at the open end (knotting end, rubber band, or other)
- Heat the sock and rice in the microwave for about 1 minute. Shaking the sock after heating will ensure that the heat is evenly distributed and there are no hot spots. We always recommend that you check the temperature of the sock on yourself before applying to your pet's skin or fur. If the sock is too hot for you, it will be too hot for your pet. Make sure to check the skin at the area you are warming at least one time during treatment to be sure it is not too hot.

* If you use another type of hot pack, be sure to place a towel between the skin and the hot pack. We do not recommend using a heating pad or hot water bottles on animals due to the non-uniform heat in these devices and their ability to cause a burn. If your pet reacts negatively to the application of heat, we recommend removing the heat source immediately as your pet's skin may be sensitive and we do not want to burn the skin. You may need to apply a towel directly to the skin if the area has been shaved to prevent reactions from your pet.

2. Massage for edema

The goal of this massage is to gently stimulate the body to reabsorb any fluid. There does not have to be firm or hard pressure and your pet should not object to this touching. If your pet acts painful, you are pushing too hard. The lymphatic system only needs light touch, even as little as tickling the skin to stimulate fluid reabsorption. We recommend you start at the most distal portion of the swelling (toward the paw) and work toward the body in order to stimulate the body to absorb the fluid and move it toward the heart.

3. Cryotherapy/Cold packs (optional if your pet seems sore after exercise) -

This treatment can be beneficial after exercise in order to prevent swelling and pain related to activity. **Place an ice pack over the affected area for 10-15 minutes.** This treatment can be done 2-3 times per day. Be sure to check the area under the ice pack several times during icing to be sure the area is not getting too cold. Again, if it is too cold for your skin, then it is likely too cold for your pet. You can reduce the degree of coolness directly on the skin by applying a single layer of towel between the ice pack and the skin to improve comfort and prevent sticking of the baggie. ** Cold packs can be made by using a bag of frozen vegetables, or by placing ice cubes or crushed ice in a baggie.