

Post Op › Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy (TPLO)

Your dog has had a procedure called a Tibial Plateau Leveling Osteotomy (TPLO) to repair his/her torn cranial cruciate ligament (CCL). You may have heard this ligament referred to as the anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). This is the term used in people and is the same structure as the CCL in dogs. The following numerical list is a brief description of the restrictions, care and what to expect post-operatively. Below that list is a more detailed description corresponding to the same numbers. If, however, this is unclear or you have any questions please call Veterinary Orthopedic Services at (801) 277-8777.



NO LICKING

Licking is NEVER OK. Licking is bad for the incision and will prevent healing, or worse, cause the incision to open up and expose the surgery site to infection.



NO GOING OUTSIDE (OFF-LEASH)

Keep your dog on a leash at all times when not in the house for 8 weeks. No doggie door. No letting him/her out in the backyard. No matter what time of day, no matter what the weather, he/she is on a leash at all times when outside for 8 weeks.

1. **Pain management.** Your dog received an epidural of morphine prior to the surgery. Post-operatively you will be giving a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). Please give as directed starting with the 1st dose the evening of the surgery
2. **Antibiotics.** Typically cephalexin is dispensed for antibiotic prophylaxis (prevention). You may have received a different antibiotic. Please give as directed starting with the first dose the evening of the surgery.
3. **Ice.** Please ice the knee 10 minutes on each side three times a day for 3 days. If you have taken your dog home the day of surgery ice the knee once that day. Ice packs can be made of ice in a bag, frozen vegetables which can be refrozen (if they don't get too thawed and mushy) or gel packs that can be purchased at most pharmacies.
4. **Exercise.** I am going to keep this simple. Your dog is not allowed out of the house off leash FOR ANY REASON for 8 weeks post-operatively. That means no doggie door and no letting him/her out in the yard off leash. Controlled leash walking is encouraged starting with a few houses and back. No extension leashes! As he/she will tolerate longer walks are permitted. Starting at 8 weeks off leash walking and jogging is permitted SLOWLY building up to full function over the next 8 weeks.
5. **Swimming.** If your dog likes to swim you can begin deep water swimming starting at 14 days post-operatively. It is important that the dog is gently guided into deep water and allowed to swim in a controlled fashion and gently guided back out of the water.

6. **Physical therapy.** Physical therapy can be used to expedite and smooth your dog's recovery. If you are interested please contact Animal Care Center in Bountiful (801) 294-5960 or Utah Pet Rehab and Acupuncture in Salt Lake City at (435) 640-5451. I discourage you from attempting physical therapy on your own without the guidance of a veterinary physical therapist.
7. **Stairs.** Stairs are permitted but should be limited. Try to avoid stairs when possible, but when necessary should be done slowly and on leash. Ramps are not better than stairs and should also be avoided when possible.
8. **Slick flooring.** Slippery floors should be avoided at all times for 8 weeks
9. **Wound care.** There is no bandage placed on the incision. Antibiotic ointment should be applied to the incision initially after icing and then twice daily until the staples are removed. There may be some bloody or blood tinged discharge for the 1st 24hours after surgery. If it is excessive or lasts longer please contact Veterinary Orthopedic Services.
10. **Bruising.** There will be bruising around the incision and down the leg. It may be red or darker. This is normal and may increase for up to 2 days after surgery and then slowly resolve.
11. **Swelling.** It is not unusual to have some incisional swelling. It should not be excessive or be fluid filled. However, it is common to see swelling of the tarsus (the joint below the surgery) that develops 2-3 days after surgery. This may feel gelatinous (like Jell-O.) This is edema and will resolve 2-3 days after it develops.
12. **Licking.** Licking is NEVER OK. Licking is bad for the incision and will prevent healing, or worse, cause the incision to open up and expose the surgery site to infection. If your dog is licking, or you think might lick, you need to purchase an E-collar. This is a large plastic cone that goes over their head and prevents access to the incision.
13. **Rechecks.** Return in 14 days for staple removal. Your vet may or may not suggest follow-up x-rays. I will defer to the judgment of your veterinarian as to the timing and/or necessity of these x-rays.

Now a more detailed description of the numbers above.

1. **Pain management.** This surgery is a painful procedure and pain management is a necessity. The protocol that I have used in thousands of orthopedic cases utilizes a pre-operative epidural of morphine. This will last between 12-24 hours. This is a pain block only and does not inhibit motor (muscle) function. Therefore, when the anesthesia has worn off the dog can use his/her legs but still have pain control. When pain medications are given pre-operatively the need for post-operative medication is greatly reduced. Because of this diminished need for pain medications, it is common to use only non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) post-operatively. Your vet, however, may prescribe additional pain medications such as an opiate (e.g. codeine or a Fentanyl patch) or an opioid (e.g. Tramadol.) These are good medications to use in conjunction with the NSAID prescribed and can be given as necessary. If, however, you feel at any time the pain is not adequately controlled please call either Veterinary Orthopedic Services or your veterinarian.
2. **Antibiotics.** Antibiotics are given to prevent post-operative infection. These are usually

given for 5-7 days. If, however, your dog's skin was inflamed or infected a longer course of antibiotics will be prescribed.

3. **Ice.** Icing is one of the most important things you can do to help your dog in the immediate post-operative period. It controls and decreases inflammation and will help to reduce post-operative pain.
4. **Exercise.** This is probably to most controversial topic amongst veterinary surgeons. I try to keep it simple. Keep your dog on a leash at all times when not in the house for 8 weeks. And, yes, that means AT ALL TIMES. No doggie door. No letting him/her out in the backyard. No matter what time of day, no matter what the weather, he/she is on a leash at all times when outside for 8 weeks. Walking is encouraged. This is on a short leash (no extension leashes). Here are some guidelines, but they are only that. If your dog is doing well and can tolerate more without discomfort it is OK to accelerate these distances as he/she will tolerate. **That means that he/she is no worse at the end of the walk than at the beginning and that at the beginning of the next walk he/she is no worse than at the end of the previous walk.** Here are some guidelines. Begin with 2-3 houses and back for a few days. Slowly build to ¼ mile twice daily until staple removal. From there continue to build up to ½ mile twice daily over the next 2 weeks. This is probably a good level to stay at for the next 4 weeks. At 2 months post-operatively off leash exercise is permitted. No ball, stick or Frisbee tossing for another 2 months. At 4 months, if all is well, he/she can resume full exercise if it is well tolerated.
5. **Swimming.** *See above.*
6. **Physical therapy.** *See above.*
7. **Stairs.** *See above.*
8. **Slick flooring.** *See above.*
9. **Wound care.** *See above.*
10. **Bruising.** *See above.*
11. **Swelling.** *See above.*
12. **Licking.** *See above.*
13. **Rechecks.** *See above.*