

The first few months after spinal surgery are a very important part of your pet's recovery. With the right care and support during this time, we can help ensure a smooth recovery, minimise complications, and achieve the best possible long-term outcome.

First 2 weeks:

- > **Strict Cage Rest:** Your dog should be confined to a crate for 8 weeks, leaving only for short, leashed bathroom breaks.
- > **Incision Care:** Check the site daily for redness, swelling, or drainage. Use a cone (E-collar) to prevent licking.
- > **Ice Therapy:** Apply cold packs (ice) to the surgical site for 5 minutes, three times per day for the first 72 hours to reduce inflammation. Make sure to wrap ice packs in a tea towel to prevent direct contact between ice and the skin.

Weeks 3–8:

Following your 2-week check-up at MASH, you can start physiotherapy. We may recommend you see a canine physiotherapist, but in many cases “at home” physiotherapy will benefit the recovery greatly.

Massage:

Gently massaging the neck, forelimbs and hindlimbs for 10 minutes twice a day, particularly at the start of a physio session.

At-home Physiotherapy:

These exercises should be done within your pet's comfort level, and they should not appear to be in any pain during or after the physiotherapy.

Depending on your pet's diagnosis, we generally recommend a combination of physiotherapy exercises that can be performed twice a day at home, with each exercise being performed for approximately 2 minutes.



Passive Range of Motion (PROM)

Passive Range of Motion (PROM): Passive range of motion exercises on all 4 legs. With your dog lying on their side, gently move the legs in a bicycle motion, with your hand on the base of the foot as shown.



Toe pinch:

Gently pinch the webbing between the toes so that your pet naturally pulls the leg back (retracts the leg). Release the pinch and allow the leg to return to a normal relaxed position and then repeat.



Neck stretches:

Have your pet follow a treat with their nose, 5 times to the left, 5 times to the right. This improves strength and stretch in the neck.



Weight Shifting:

Place your dog's hind paws flat on the ground, an even distance apart. Gently rock your dog from side to side while they are supported and standing to improve balance.



Sit-to-Stand Exercises:

Encourage the dog to sit and then stand on command to build strength in the back legs.



If they become sore during or after an exercise, please stop and give them 24 hours of rest before attempting the exercises again. If they continue to appear uncomfortable, please check with the surgery team at MASH.

After 8-weeks:

Following the 8-week post op check-up at MASH we can start getting your pet back towards normal activity.

- > **Supervised freedom:** While they are supervised, your dog can now be allowed out of the crate. We recommend leaving the crate set up in case you need to leave them alone, or in case they get excited (zoomies) in which case they can be given a "timeout" back in the crate.
- > **Slow progressive return to activity:** Short leash walks can now be started. It is recommended you determine the "normal" level of activity you would like for your dog and then reintroduce a quarter of this activity level each week over 4 weeks.
- > **Surface Training:** Take your dog for walks on different surfaces (grass, gravel, carpet) to aid in proprioceptive (proprioception) retraining.

