



What is an FHO?

An FHO, or femoral head ostectomy, is a surgical procedure performed to relieve many types of hip pain or discomfort. Diseases such as hip dysplasia, Legg-Calve-Perthes (femoral head necrosis), or trauma causing femoral head fractures or luxations have the potential to be treated with an FHO.

The hip joint is a “ball in socket” type joint. During an FHO, the ball portion of the joint is removed to prevent the pain that is associated with the ball rubbing against a socket that has been damaged by degenerative changes. The procedure does sound quite radical, but most pets recover incredibly well.

How will my pet function after surgery?

None of the muscles that support the affected hind limb or hip are removed during FHO surgery. With appropriate rehabilitation, the muscles that span between the pelvis, spine, and hind limb take over the natural hip’s functions and the pet will be pain free. Some pets do retain a “mechanical” lameness, meaning that they have a mild limp, but it is not due to pain.

What care is required after surgery?

Postoperative care primarily focuses on rehabilitation. Activity is limited for two weeks postoperatively to allow for incisional healing. Cold and warm compresses are generally used to control swelling during the first week after surgery. We will teach you how to perform passive range of motion exercises (hip flexion and extension) on your pet post surgery. Your pet will be encouraged to use the affected hind limb early and often. Formal physical rehabilitation with a physical therapist may be recommended for some patients as well.



Top: X-ray of a dog with an old right femoral head fracture and arthritis in right hip.

Bottom: X-ray following right FHO surgery.