



Why should I consider hip replacement for my dog?

Many medium to large breed dogs are predisposed to hip dysplasia, the technical term for poorly fitting hip joints. This poor fit causes painful stretching and displacement of the joint, leading to progressive hip arthritis. You may notice stiffness and hobbling in the rear legs, as well as difficulty lying down and rising again, climbing steps, jumping into a car, or engaging in athletic activities. Many animals seem stoic about arthritic pain, while others may occasionally yelp. When anti-inflammatory medications, weight loss, or other conservative measures don't provide adequate relief, there's another option: replacing the hip joint, which is 98% percent successful in restoring the proper fit and function of the joint.

What does the surgery involve?

If your vet thinks your dog is a candidate for hip replacement, the surgeon will do a thorough evaluation, including a physical examination, x-rays, and lab work. If surgery is recommended, your surgeon will discuss the costs involved, any related risks for your dog, the recovery process, and whatever concerns you have.

On the day of surgery, you'll need to arrive promptly, so we have time to prep your dog and begin administering anesthesia prior to the procedure. Surgery involves making an incision, replacing the hip ball with a metal implant and the socket with a plastic cup, then closing the incision. There are now two forms of hip replacement surgery, one is cemented and one is cementless. Your surgeon will discuss which of these surgeries would be better for your dog as there are individual criteria involved in the decision.

Your dog will usually spend one night in our clinic for pain management and go home the following day.

What care is required after surgery?

Postoperative care will consist of rest and careful activity. For 4-6 weeks, your dog will be restricted to short leash walks only. During that time, your pet should not be allowed to run, jump, or play; such activities can loosen or displace the new joint or even fracture the healing bone. X-rays at the end of this rest period will determine when your dog can start the gradual return to normal activity.

What is the prognosis for recovery?

It may take 4-6 months before your pet fully rehabilitates and improves muscle mass. Ultimately, most dogs with total hip replacements return to their normal level of activity and lead a comfortable life. Remarkably, although some dogs need both hips replaced, many do almost as well after the replacement of one hip even when both were affected by dysplasia.



Top: X-ray shows a dog's pelvis with poor incongruity of both hips indicating hip dysplasia.

Bottom: X-ray shows a total hip replacement implant on the dog's left side.