

## **Knee Surgery for Anterior Cruciate Damage**

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Ligaments are tissue bands that form connections between bones and prevent joints from moving in abnormal ways. The knee joint, with the femur on top and the tibia and fibula bones under it, is stabilized by collateral ligaments on both sides and the cruciate ligaments deep inside. Cartilage pads called menisci, lie between the contact areas of the bones. Tearing of the anterior, or cranial, cruciate ligament causes lameness and leads to severe arthritis. The medial, or inside, meniscus can also be torn or crushed because of the resulting instability.

There are numerous surgical procedures to restore function to a knee that has a torn anterior cruciate ligament. Most of these techniques achieve good results when performed by an experienced veterinary surgeon and good post-surgical care is provided at home. After surgery antibiotics will be prescribed for one week and anti-inflammatory/pain relief drugs for 2-3 weeks. With any surgical technique your dog **MUST** be kept on leash control, for at least six weeks, when not confined to a kennel or other small space. Short walks under leash control, several times daily, can be started the day after surgery even though most dogs won't start bearing weight on the leg for several days. The walks can start at about five minutes and be increased by five minutes longer each week for the first six weeks. Running up stairs, running free, playing with balls or other dogs, or other athletic activities **MUST** be prevented. After the initial six week period exercise may be **GRADUALLY** increased. During this time atrophied muscles will start to rebuild and range of joint motion will improve.

Although no procedure will completely restore perfect function, almost all dogs will be able to resume an active life - much better than those that do not receive surgery. Most will need occasional anti-inflammatory medication to treat moderate arthritis. Some dogs may benefit from dietary supplements designed to help repair damaged cartilage.