



Pawsitive Steps Canine Rehab

Putting the pep
back in your pup's
step

CARING FOR YOUR PARALYZED PET

If your pet experiences paralysis, they can still live long, healthy and happy lives. There will be extra care involved to help keep them healthy. Paralysis can sometimes be temporary, while other times it may be permanent. Talk with your veterinarian about your pet's prognosis and if caring for their needs is something you will be able to do.

Confinement

Pets who were previously active prior to injury sometimes have a hard time accepting they cannot move as well. They do not understand the concept of part of their body not working, so they will drag themselves along surfaces, which often times can lead to injury. They may not be able to feel pain, and may develop sores from dragging themselves. They may also jump on furniture like previously and cause further injury. It is important to keep them in a safe and confined space when they are not supervised.

Cleanliness

Your pet will not be able to clean themselves after injury. They often have bowel and bladder incontinence, which can end up in their fur or on their skin. It is essential to check them every few hours and wash them with a gentle soap-free shampoo. Your veterinarian may recommend a specific dry shampoo or other spot cleaner; follow their advice, as some products can increase skin irritation – especially when used frequently. Other products like baby wipes and dry shampoos can be used if you find that your pet is frequently becoming dirty. Diapers can be used if necessary, but be sure to change them often and wash and dry the skin often as well. Remnants of bowel and bladder can lead to skin breakdown (ulcers/bed sores)

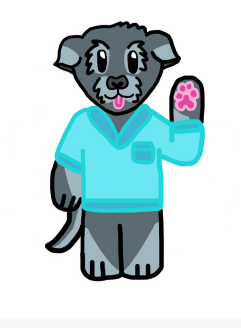
Bed Sores/Pressure Injuries

Just like humans, pets can get pressure injuries from immobility, sheer force (dragging) and moisture (incontinence). Pets who are not able to get up and change positions are at a high risk of pressure injury. The most common points are the hips, feet (from dragging), legs, and tail.

our pet will need soft, thick bedding to reduce the risk of pressure sores from laying in one position for too long. Memory foam beds, or egg crate mattresses are a good option when covered by blankets that can be changed regularly. The use of puppy pads or underpads under the blankets can reduce soiling of the mattress material. You may want to invest in a couple of washable, orthopedic beds.

Booties, drag bags, harnesses, and wheelchairs can all help to prevent sores from dragging/mobility.

Prevention is the key. Ideally, change positions every two hours, frequent skin checks, bowel and bladder management, and daily bathing/cleanliness should all be performed to decreased the chances of pressure injuries. If your pet does develop sore, visit with your veterinarian for proper treatment.



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Bladder Management

Bladder management is very important in the health of your paralyzed pet. These pets are prone to urinary tract infections (UTIs), and those infections can go to the kidneys, causing more severe issues. Talk to your veterinarian about care and recommendations for bladder care and health. If you suspect your pet has a UTI, contact your vet immediately.

Expressing the Bladder

Expressing the bladder can be one of the most difficult tasks in paralyzed pet care. If you have difficulty or questions, ask your veterinarian or vet tech for assistance.

A common misconception is that if there is a soiled area that the dog expressed its bladder, however that may not be the case. Pets can have overflow or leaking, especially if their abdomen is pressed on. The bladder should be expressed at minimum of 3 times a day.

With your pet sitting or supported standing, place 1 hand on either side of the abdomen, just in front of the back legs. Gently massage and then while applying slow, steady pressure with increasing firmness, begin pressing on the abdomen over the bladder. It will feel like a balloon. It may be easier to have both hands flattened and the fingers slightly spread apart while pressing so that the bladder is stabilized and squeezed by both. You can also make a fist with one hand and press against a flat hand. The flat hand will help to make sure the bladder stays between your two hands. Gently begin to squeeze your hands together and press both hands toward the tail. It is important to ensure the bladder is completely empty. Failure to completely empty the bladder can result in UTIs.

If your pet is showing some ability to urinate, take them outside frequently to try to go to the bathroom - hold your pet upright in the grass and give them a chance to get the idea.

Monitor closely to see if a normal amount of urine comes out. If there is little to no urination, the bladder must still be expressed 3-4 times daily.

Take your pet to your veterinarian every 3 months for a urine test and culture since bladder infections are very common in paralyzed dogs.



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CARING FOR YOUR PARALYZED PET Physical Therapy

Physical Therapy and rehabilitation are important aspects of recovery. This helps with the physical health of your pet. If the pet is able to regain some mobility, PT will help improve those outcomes. At the very least, it will provide education on adaptive equipment and proper range of motion and stretching techniques to help your pup stay healthy. Ask your veterinarian for a referral to physical therapy.

Adaptive Equipment

There are all sorts of adaptive equipment available to help paralyzed pets stay healthy and provide mobility. Help 'em up harnesses are a great tool if your pet is not completely paralyzed or just needs some assistance for mobility. Wheelchairs are also great options. Both Help 'Em Up harnesses and Wheelchairs are available to rent or purchase from us.

Mental Health

Paralyzed pets can often go into a depression. It is important to provide them with mental stimulation. Take them outside or to the front yard as opposed to the back yard. Give them puzzles to do to keep their minds sharp. Make sure they feel very loved.

Weight Management

Nutrition and weight management are important aspects for health of any pet, but especially when recovering from an injury. Extra weight, even 5 extra pounds, adds a significant amount of stress to the body. The lighter the pet, the easier it is for them to increase independence and mobility. Monitor their food and snack intake. Talk to your veterinarian about the most appropriate diet for you pet and any supplements they might suggest.



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