

Total Hip Replacement

Hip dysplasia is a common heritable condition in dogs. Dogs affected with hip dysplasia develop shallow, loose hip sockets often within the first year after birth. The condition usually progresses resulting in partial or complete hip dislocation. Arthritis develops which can sometimes be severe, even early in life. Signs of hip dysplasia may comprise of difficulty rising, limping, walking with a "waddle", and bunny hopping while running. Some dogs will have trouble going up and down stairs or jumping into a vehicle. While a percentage of dogs will maintain well without medication or surgery many dogs show more clinical signs necessitating treatment. Pain is often controlled with medication, however some dogs remain painful despite medication or supplements. Dogs that require frequent medication to be comfortable or do not seem to respond to medication are candidates for total hip replacement.

Total hip replacement is commonly performed in people and in dogs. Many dogs from Idaho, Utah, Oregon, and Nevada that are suffering from hip dysplasia are referred to WestVet for hip replacement. The procedure establishes a stable, comfortable hip with which dogs may return back to normal activities such as walking, running, and playing. The procedure involves the removal of the diseased ball and socket and replacement with a prosthetic femoral ball, stem, and socket. Two major types of hip replacement are performed, cemented and non-cemented. The cemented hip replacement is often used in older dogs or certain breeds that have thinner bone cortices while the non-cemented procedure is used more often for younger dogs with thicker bone cortices. The success rate for total hip replacement in dogs is over 90%. Like any procedure, however, complications can occur. These may include fracture of the bone, infection, dislocation, and need for removal of the implants. The chance for complications is greatly minimized by activity restriction after surgery. Dogs having a hip replacement should be confined and walked on a leash for 6 weeks. This may be difficult since most dogs are feeling much more comfortable and are anxious to resume activity. Radiographic evaluation is performed at 6 weeks and recommendations are made for resuming normal activity.

While in many cases of hip dysplasia, the condition is bilateral (both hips are affected), dogs will often compensate well on the hip that was replaced allowing us to delay or eliminate the need to have the opposite hip replaced. Most dogs that have a hip replacement are able to resume a normal quality of life. Once healing has been established, dogs may resume running, jumping, hunting, and playing.

For more information regarding total hip replacement, please contact WestVet Animal Emergency and Specialty Center. Consultation with the WestVet surgeons requires a referral from your family veterinarian.