



PET ADVICE – HOME PHYSIOTHERAPY

Once your pet has left the veterinary practice she/he may require some simple physiotherapy at home. We do appreciate that clients are keen to get their pets home and are relieved to see them again and so not all of the instruction given will be remembered, we are all human after all! So here we have a step by step guide to help you remember all that you have been shown in the practice to help your pet to recover as fast as possible.

Massage

This is required before physiotherapy is performed. This helps to get the blood circulating around the body and warms the muscles ready for the physiotherapy session.

Begin with firm, slow stroking motions with the heel of the hand, from the base of the tail to the shoulder blades – always remember to massage towards the heart to increase circulation. After 10 or so strokes you can then move on to small circular motions. Start again at the base of the tail and make small circular motions all the way along the back to the shoulder blades 5 times. The circles should be about the size of the dog's/cat's paw.

The pressure of the stroking and circling should be no more than 4kg of pressure. If your pet is fairly small and this amount of pressure seems to cause discomfort then start off with much lighter movements and work up to a pressure that your pet readily accepts. Repeat these exercises 6 – 8 times before moving on to the hind limbs.

This is done in exactly the same way but remember to apply slightly less pressure over bony protrusions. Start once again with the stroking and remember to go all the way to the spine and follow with the circles. You should need to spend about 4-5 minutes on each leg if possible, but remember a little time on massage and physiotherapy is much better than none at all!

Depending on your animal's problem you may or may not need to progress onto the fore limbs. If so repeat in exactly the same way as the hind limbs.

Please be aware if your pet has had surgery, leave a 4cm square area around the wound for 72hrs post surgery so as not to disturb blood clots and to allow any post operative swelling to subside.

You are now ready to begin physiotherapy.





Physiotherapy.

The best position for the start of the physiotherapy is with the patient lying on his/her side. If your pet will not readily oblige then all the exercises can be performed with the patient standing. But remember if hind limb weakness is the problem the patient will tire much sooner if standing for all of the exercises.

Beginning with the hind limbs, flex and extend one limb at a time throughout its normal range of movement. Remember not to force the limb at anytime. As you flex and extend the limb it will become suppler and a further range of motion may well be obtained.

Action Plan.

1. With one hand on the hip and the other below the hock, gently stretch the hind limb towards the ear then as far back as the patient will allow.
2. Extend the limb down away from the body then flex upwards into the body.
3. Grasping the leg just above the hock with one hand and just below the hock with the other hand, flex and extend the hock joint.
4. Once these exercises have been performed 4-5 times the limb can then be moved in a cycling motion forwards and backwards.
5. Once these exercises have been repeated on both hind limbs 4-5 times repeat the process on the fore limbs if necessary.
6. Place the patient into the standing position ensuring all four feet are placed flat to the floor. Then supporting the patient under the abdomen just in front of hind limbs, gently bounce up and down 10 times.
7. Next, progress to rocking forwards and backwards 10 times then from side to side 10 times, always checking that the feet are correctly placed.
8. Now lift one hind limb off the floor for 5 seconds then repeat with the other hind limb. Repeat this exercise 4-5 times and remember to support the patient under the abdomen.
9. This next exercise will probably require two pairs of hands. With one person being in control of the front end, the second person is required to kneel on the floor behind the patient and grasp the ankles of each hind limb. The idea is now to walk the patient across the floor for 5-10 strides or more if the patient is doing really well and not tiring.
10. Finally, don't forget to massage and move the tail through its full range of movement – it is important to be able to wag one's tail!



The Downs Veterinary Practice provides animal healthcare to the highest possible standards for pet owners in the Bristol area. If you need help or advice regarding your pet's health, or if you are considering buying a pet and would just like some friendly advice, please visit our web site at www.downsvets.co.uk or call us on 0117 962 2828.



Points to remember

- Different animals tire at different rates and physiotherapy is tiring for recovering patients. Try not to over-do the physiotherapy, if your patient is becoming tired allow them to rest for a while before starting again.
- Try to do at least 4 sessions daily. The more sessions you can manage the more benefit to your pet.
- If the physiotherapy exercises are tiring your patient out quickly, then use more massage and less physiotherapy until the patient's stamina increases.
- Do not force limbs to move further than they are willing; hurting your patient will, at the least, cause all the muscles to tense and undo all the work preparing the animal for physiotherapy with the massage.



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