

# Arthrodesis

## The Procedure

An arthrodesis is a salvage procedure used to fuse an unstable or chronically painful joint. Fusion eliminates movement painful movement so that the patient is comfortable again.

We might consider an arthrodesis for a joint affected by fracture, irreparable ligament damage or chronic arthritis.

Joints that can be arthrodesed include the hock (ankle), carpus (wrist), elbow, shoulder and stifle (knee).

## The Surgery

All of the cartilage is removed from the diseased joint, and bone graft is used as a scaffold for new bone to fuse the joint together. A metal plate and screws are used to bridge the joint and hold it stable whilst the bone heals.

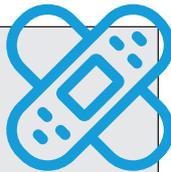
## Post operative care

Arthrodesis is a major procedure and it is important to follow these instructions closely for best chance of a successful outcome.



### Surgical Wound:

Your pet will have a wound and stitches following surgery. Please check this area twice daily, and report any swelling, redness or discharge from the wound.



### Medication:

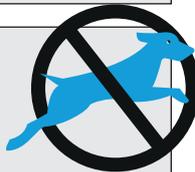
Your pet will be prescribed antibiotics and pain relief, it is important to follow instructions to avoid complications. Please report any changes in demeanour, vomiting or diarrhoea to your vet immediately.



### Exercise restriction:

**Strict rest for six weeks is essential for uncomplicated bone healing.**

This means confinement to a cage or room with no furniture to jump on and off, especially when your pet is unsupervised. Stairs should be avoided and toileting should always be on a lead.



### Cold & Warm Therapy:

If there is no dressing present, for 3 days post operatively – use an ice pack wrapped in a towel applied to the joint (not directly over the wound) for 5-10 mins 2-3 times daily.

Some swelling of the operated leg is to be expected and cold therapy and gentle massage from the toes up towards the body will reduce this.



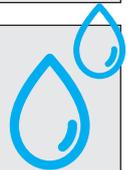
### Dressing:

A dressing (which may be splinted) might be used as additional support post operatively. The dressing should be changed at least once a week, and likely more frequently than this initially. You should check the dressing twice daily for any sign of discharge or smell and ensure that it remains clean and dry at all times. If you are concerned about the dressing, or your pet is chewing the dressing please contact your practice immediately.



### Hydrotherapy and physiotherapy:

This can be started once the 6 week post operative radiographs have been taken, under the guidance of your vet.



### Return to exercise:

Once healing has occurred and is evident on the radiographs your pet will be allowed to increase their activity levels. You will be given an exercise plan by your vet once we have reviewed your pet's radiographs.



### Post operative radiographs:

Radiographs will need to be taken at 6 weeks post operatively, and usually a further set between 12-16 weeks post operatively to confirm boney healing. It is sometimes necessary to take sequential radiographs over the course of 3-6 months.

