

**Post-operative rehabilitation** following surgery for front or rear limb paralysis is crucial for a successful recovery. Paralysis in pets is most commonly caused by intervertebral disc herniation, but it can also result from trauma, tumors, malformations, fibrocartilaginous embolism (spinal cord stroke), cysts, or extradural bleeds. In most cases, spinal cord decompression surgery, like a ventral slot or hemilaminectomy, is performed to relieve pressure on the spine. Other cases may require additional stabilization along with decompression. Your surgeon will discuss your pet's specific condition and the details of their procedure, but rehabilitation generally follows a similar approach regardless of the injury or surgery.

## Rehabilitation Steps

### 1. Confinement:

Your pet should be confined to a well-padded, secure space until they regain mobility with minimal neurological deficits. Suitable options include an airline travel kennel, a playpen, or a partitioned area in a room. Ensure the area is:

- Well-padded with absorbent materials (for accidents)
- Has non-slip flooring (like rugs, rubber mats, or yoga mats)
- Includes separate spaces for food and water

### 2. Elimination:

We generally won't discharge pets until they can urinate and defecate independently. Initially, carry your pet outside for bathroom breaks or use a support sling like the Help Em Up Harness. Monitor for any blood, unusual odor, or discoloration in the urine, which could signal a bladder infection. Likewise, check for any blood or dark, tarry stools, which could indicate intestinal ulcers associated with medications or the initial neurological issues.


### 3. Safety Precautions:

Keep your pet away from slick floors, stairs, or other unstable surfaces that could lead to injury or delayed recovery.

## CONTACT INFORMATION

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## Rehabilitation Steps

### 4. Standing Support:

Gently lift your pet from a sitting position, place their rear feet in a normal stance, and use a hand under their belly or a rolled towel (or Help Em Up Harness) for support. Gradually release support to encourage weight-bearing on their legs and feet. Perform this for 5–15 minutes, three times daily.

### 5. Passive Range of Motion (PROM):

Please refer to the attached handout for exercises that will help maintain joint flexibility.

### 6. Encouraged Walking:

Stand across a non-slip surface, like carpet or grass, and encourage your pet to walk to you for a treat. Even if they occasionally drag their back legs, this helps build confidence. Ideally, have a second person provide additional support to prevent full-body dragging, which can cause sores or rashes.

### 7. Controlled Leash Walks:

As your pet gains strength, start with focused leash walks of 5–10 minutes, increasing the duration as they progress.

### 8. Enrichment Activities:

Some dogs may become discouraged when they cannot walk freely or spend as much time with family. Enrichment games (see attached handout) can help provide the mental stimulation they need.

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