



FEMORAL HEAD AND NECK OSTECTOMY

What is a femoral head and neck ostectomy?

A femoral head and neck ostectomy (FHO) is a procedure in which the portion of the femur (thigh bone) which forms part of the hip joint is removed. This procedure effectively removes any bone on bone contact in the hip joint and is used as a pain relieving procedure for patients with severe arthritis of the hip joint or a fracture that is not able to be repaired.

What are the risks of surgery?

There are risks associated with all procedures that are performed in veterinary surgery. It is important to understand the risks associated with the procedure being performed and what that may lead to.

Minor Complications:

These are issues that can be seen more frequently but are generally very readily dealt with. The common complications seen include:

1. Superficial infections of the skin - this will be seen as discharge or oozing from the surgery site.
2. Swelling
3. Pain

If any of these are seen in the post-operative period then it is important to discuss this with your veterinarian.

Serious complications are very rare (<1%) with FHO procedures. These complications include damage to the nerves of the leg and potential fracture of the femur when cutting through the bone to remove the femoral head.



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What should be expected after surgery?

The surgical incision will generally heal within 2 weeks. At this point any external sutures are removed. This incision should be monitored for swelling or discharge.

With an FHO procedure, we want to encourage our pet to use the leg and start performing rehab exercises as soon as possible after the operation. This will help reduce the amount of muscle lost and improve the recovery. Consulting a veterinarian with experience in rehabilitation is strongly recommended for an optimum surgical recovery. Effective pain relief allows us to encourage early movement without our pets feeling discomfort. This often will include a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory, an opioid pain relief and potentially other additional pain reliefs that may be suitable for your pet.

Long term, most small patients (cats and dogs under 20kg) are expected to have very good long term comfort and consistent use of the leg. Dogs over 20kg can be more prone to ongoing difficulties with exercise due to the increased weight that needs to be supported by the altered joint.

Ongoing gait abnormalities can be seen which are generally not painful and are due to the alteration in how the joint moves without the femoral head. If you are noticing that your pet does walk strangely then it is a good idea to consult with your veterinarian to see if there is any pain in the leg which may necessitate further medication and rehabilitation or if this is just a functional, non-painful change.