

Mountain View Animal Hospital

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Luxating Patella

The Luxating Patella-

The patella is a small bone in your dog's hind leg. It fits into a groove at the bottom of the femur bone and lies between the tendon that runs from femur to tibia. A luxated patella is a dislocation of the patella from this groove in the femur. It can occur due to trauma but is most commonly seen in small dogs due to congenital defects. The femur and the tibia are supposed to be aligned in a straight line but in many small dogs, the femur bows out and the tibia rotates in. This position does not allow the tendon to fall in its normal s-shaped path and it is pulled toward the inside of the leg, causing dislocation of the patella. If the patellar groove is too shallow, this can facilitate luxation as well.

Diagnosis-

Your veterinarian can diagnose this condition by way of a physical exam and x-ray. The x-ray may show arthritic changes that have arisen due to this condition. On physical exam your veterinarian can feel your pet's patella. They will be able to feel the patella move in and out of place on the exam. Sometimes they will feel the patella when it is stuck out of place and they will be able to massage it back into the groove.

Treatment-

Treatment of patellar luxation may not be needed for some dogs. Others may require surgery if they are demonstrating gait abnormalities, lameness, or severe rear-leg deformities. This surgery could consist of a variety of techniques such as creating a restraint to prevent dislocation, deepening the patellar groove, straightening the leg by removing bone segments, or repositioning where the tendon attaches to the tibia. Your veterinarian can discuss with you the best method of treatment for your animal's specific case of patellar luxation.

Home Care-

Your veterinarian may prescribe pain medicine if your dog seems uncomfortable. Make sure you finish all medication to keep your pet comfortable. Your pet should stay calm and quite especially if they have surgery for their problem.