

## Arthroscopy

**Arthroscopy is a minimally invasive technique** utilized to evaluate and treat many joint disorders. Arthroscopic procedures provide a comprehensive view of the inside of a joint and allow the surgeon better exposure to joint problems than many surgical approaches. Due to the small size of the incisions used with arthroscopy, discomfort is minimized and recovery is often faster than with conventional surgical techniques.

### INDICATIONS FOR ARTHROSCOPY

- Diagnose partial tears of the cranial cruciate ligament where the stifle is painful but stable.
- Evaluate the integrity of the menisci either prior to or following cranial cruciate ligament repair.
  - Damaged menisci can be removed arthroscopically.
- Evaluation and treatment of various forms of elbow dysplasia.
  - Fragmented coronoid process.
  - OCD lesions.
  - Ununited anconeal process.
  - Evaluation of elbow incongruity.
- OCD of the shoulder, stifle and hock.
- Medial shoulder instability.
- Bicipital tendonitis.
- Evaluation and synovial biopsy of patients with polyarthropathy.
- Evaluation, biopsy and lavage of septic arthritis.

### PROCEDURE

- General anesthesia is required for arthroscopy.
- The affected limb(s) is clipped and prepared as for sterile surgery.
- Three incisions are used for most arthroscopic procedures. Each incision is less than 1/4 inch long.
- If necessary the arthroscope is utilized to visualize the problem and then arthroscopic instruments are utilized to perform operative procedures.
- After the procedure is completed, the joint is infused with a local anesthetic and the small incisions are closed.
- Sometimes a bandage is applied after arthroscopy.

### POSTOPERATIVE CARE

Incisions take **7-10 days** to heal. Sutures should be removed in **7-10 days**. The incisions should be inspected daily and excessive redness, swelling or discharge should be reported to your pet's surgeon.

Placing an ice compress over the affected joint(s) may help to reduce swelling. This cold pack should be applied for **5 minutes 2-3 times per day for the first 3 days**. If your pet licks or chews at the incision, you should contact your pet's surgeon or regular veterinarian for advice. Your pet's activity level should be restricted during the **first 2 postoperative weeks**.

### POTENTIAL COMPLICATIONS

- **Postoperative complications are rare.**
- **Any incisional complications should be reported** to your pet's surgeon.
- **Swelling of the affected leg is normal for the first 5 days.** This is due to leakage of fluid used to flush the joint during the procedure.
- **If the swelling persists**, you should contact your pet's surgeon for advice.

### PROGNOSIS

- The prognosis for dogs with shoulder OCD is excellent.
- The prognosis for dogs with elbow dysplasia is variable.

Other disorders also have a variable prognosis that is dependent on many factors. Your pet's surgeon will discuss the prognosis for your pet's specific disorder in more detail.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Arthroscopic instrumentation and expertise are relatively new in veterinary surgery. Arthroscopic procedures are quickly replacing many conventional surgical procedures due to the shortened hospital stay, **minimal discomfort and rapid recovery from arthroscopic techniques**. If your pet has a joint related lameness and you are interested in arthroscopic evaluation, please consult with your primary care veterinarian or contact VSC.