

# *Femoral Head and Neck Osteotomy*

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**Overview:** A femoral head and neck osteotomy (FHO) is a surgery used to treat traumatic or disease conditions in the hip joint. The hip joint is a ball-in-socket joint, consisting of the femoral head and neck (ball portion), and the acetabulum (socket), which is a portion of the pelvis. An FHO is recommended for a number of disease conditions, including avascular necrosis or Legg-Calve-Perthes disease, chronic hip luxations, fractures of the hip joint or acetabulum, and also for hip dysplasia in some circumstances.

**Signs/symptoms:** Symptoms depend upon the underlying cause of your pet's hip condition, but always include lameness of one or both of the rear legs.

**Diagnosis:** Diagnosis is made on physical exam and with radiographs (x-rays). Sometimes special views need to be taken to confirm the diagnosis.

**Treatment:** Surgery involves removing the femoral head and neck (i.e., removing the ball from the ball-and-socket joint). Scar tissue forms at the site and the hip muscles are responsible for transferring weight to the limb.

**Aftercare/outcome:** An FHO is a salvage procedure, the intent of which is to eliminate the pet's discomfort. Outcome depends on a number of factors, including the dog's size (the smaller the better), the age (the younger the better), your dog's activity level and use of the limb postoperatively, and owner compliance or willingness to do physical therapy and ability to encourage your pet to use his/her leg in the postoperative recovery period.

A typical recovery is 4-6 weeks. During that time, it is actually important for the patient to exercise and use the leg as much as possible. Finding activities where your individual pet is more inclined to use the leg is an important part of the recovery. These might include walking quickly (or slowly) on a leash, playing ball, or going up and down stairs. Physical therapy by the owner or specialist is also important. After suture removal, swimming is good physical therapy as well. The more your pet uses the leg in the immediate postoperative period, the better his/her long term outcome will be.



Postoperative view of a dog that had an FHO for hip dysplasia

*Please refer to the American College of Veterinary Surgeons website*

[www.acvs.org](http://www.acvs.org) for additional information or call Dr. Boswell at 269-312-4227