

# Medial patella luxation

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**Overview:** Patella luxation is a common orthopedic condition that occurs in predominantly small breed dogs, though it can occur in large breed dogs as well. The patella, or kneecap, normally glides in a groove on the femur (thigh bone) every time the leg is extended or flexed. In dogs with a patella luxation, the patella moves to the outside of the groove, most commonly on the inside of the leg. It is a congenital condition and often affects both hind legs. Rarely, it can be caused by major trauma.

**Signs/symptoms:** Symptoms of dogs with patella luxation varies depending on the severity of the luxation (grade I-IV). Some dogs do not have any clinical signs and the diagnosis is made by your veterinarian during a physical exam. Most dogs will “skip” or hold their leg up when the patella is out of the groove until it spontaneously moves back into place or is manually reduced. When it is in place, the dog usually walks normally. If your dog has a problem on both legs, they may be reluctant to walk, or walk with an abnormal gait.

**Diagnosis:** Diagnosis is usually straightforward and determined by a physical examination. Sometimes radiographs are recommended to confirm the diagnosis and to check for concurrent orthopedic abnormalities in the knee or hip joint.

**Treatment:** Surgery is recommended for dogs that have clinical signs related to the condition or if they develop a concurrent stifle (knee) problem such as a cranial cruciate ligament ruptured. Surgery involves several steps including some/all of the following:

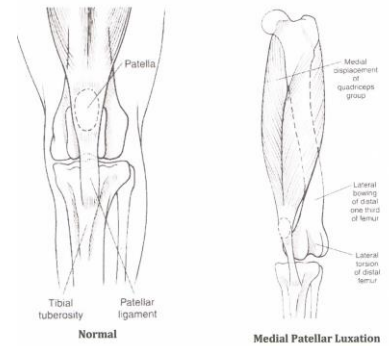
- reconstruction of surrounding tissues via joint capsule release/imbrication
- deepening of the femoral groove
- stabilizing lateral sutures
- transposition (moving) the tibial crest (the attachment point of the tendon the patella lies in)

Depending on the specific pet, surgery on one or both sides may be recommended. For both sides, the surgeries can be staged or done concurrently.

**Aftercare/outcome:** Recovery involves exercise restriction and physical therapy and generally takes 6-8 weeks. Outcomes are usually quite good (especially for dogs with grade I-III preop) with rare complications of implant loosening, which may require the implants to be removed, and relaxation, which may require the patella to be re-stabilized. Dogs with a grade IV medial patella luxation preoperatively may have persistent arthritis/lameness postop, though function should be improved. Prognosis may also be worse in large breed dogs, especially those with excessive angulation of the femur bones or abnormal hip joints.

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



## GRADE I

Knee cap can be manipulated out of its groove, but returns to its normal position spontaneously

## GRADE II

Knee cap rides out of its groove occasionally and can be replaced in the groove by manipulation

## GRADE III

Knee cap rides out of its groove most of the time but can be replaced in the groove via manipulation

## GRADE IV

Knee cap rides out of its groove all the time and cannot be replaced inside the groove