

Femoral Head Ostectomy (FHO)

by Dr. Paul Newman (<http://mobilevetsurgeon.com>)

What is the femoral head ostectomy (FHO) procedure?

Femoral head ostectomy is removal or excision of the ball portion of the hip joint. After removal, the bone is smoothed so there is no bone to bone contact occurring between the pelvis and the remaining portion of the femur. Removal of the portion of the femur that articulates with the hip joint then causes formation of a false fibrous joint.

What are the indications for FHO surgery?

Femoral head and neck excision or ostectomy is a salvage procedure used in the treatment and management of hip dysplasia, trauma, or other diseases of the hip. Hip dysplasia means malformation of the hip joints. It is the most common orthopedic disease in dogs, and a similar problem occurs in cats but much less often. The malformed hip will eventually develop some degree of arthritis and in some patients, pain. With trauma, patients can have fractures of the femoral head and often FHO surgery is indicated. There are other diseases of the hip, such as Legg Perthes' Disease, where the blood supply to the femoral head is abnormal and causes aseptic necrosis of the femoral head. In instances like these, FHO surgery is indicated to remove the diseased portion of the bone

How long will my pet be in the hospital?

Hospitalization of patients for FHO surgery typically ranges from 2-3 days including the day of the surgery and recovery. In general, most patients are discharged 1-2 days after their surgical procedure but extended hospitalization may be required if there are complications.

What is the prognosis following surgery?

In general, femoral head ostectomy is highly successful in cats and small dogs (under 40 pounds). However, because this type of fibrous pseudo-joint is an unstable joint, clinical function is more unpredictable in larger dogs, but in my hands utilizing power equipment that smooths the cut bone ends very well, pets as large as 120 pounds have done very well. Also, if your pet has severe arthritis versus an acute fracture or luxation, the recovery is generally slower.

What post-operative care is required after FHO surgery?

Post-operative care following FHO surgery is very different compared to most surgical procedures. Physical therapy is crucial to the success of the procedure. Swimming, running playing with other dogs, retrieving, etc is all encouraged starting 7-10 days after the operation. The fibrous false joint that will replace the hip joint will heal with a greater range of motion.

What are the complications or risks associated with FHO surgery?

Overall, complication rate associated with elective procedures is approximately 10-15%. Complications may range from mild and easily resolved, to more severe complications requiring further treatments or diagnostic testing.

Are any follow-up appointments required during the post-operative period?

In general, recommendations for suture removal are 10-14 days after surgery. Monthly evaluations are then done to assess progression of healing and encourage physical therapy to increase the range of motion within the hip joint. If your pet is using his/her leg normally, then no further appointments are necessary.

Remember, due to the "false" joint that is created, the leg will be slightly shorter than the other leg and your pet may have a "mechanical" limp which is very different from a "painful" limp and of no concern other than cosmetic. Our goal is to give your pet good range of motion with a pain free hip and it is hard to achieve a completely normal gait with this "salvage" procedure.