



Fractures

Bone Fractures

A bone fracture is a break in the continuity of bone. Fractures can be simple (broken into two pieces) or comminuted (broken in to multiple pieces). A compound fracture is one where there is a break in the skin over the fracture, allowing contamination of those tissues

Symptoms

- Pain at the site of injury
- Lameness or holding up the affected limb or limbs
- Swelling, bruising of soft tissues
- Abnormal angulation of the broken limb

Causes

Most bone fractures in dogs and cats occur secondary to trauma. The trauma may be severe such as being hit by a car, and some fractures can occur after a minor event such as jumping off the bed. In a small percentage of patients the fracture can be secondary to a disease which destroys the bone such as neoplasia or infection, and these are called pathological fractures.

Diagnostic tests

- X-rays of the injured site(s): sedation may be recommended to provide comfort with this procedure
- CT scan can be helpful, especially for fractures of the spine, skull and jaw

Treatment

Fractures of bones which are important for weight-bearing or joint mobility should be repaired with surgery. The type and location of the fracture will determine the best method to repair it, and can include plates and screws, bone pins and wire, external fixators, intra-medullary nails.

Some fractures may be allowed to heal by stabilizing with a cast or splint, but the veterinarian will have to evaluate the fracture and advise on this.

Some fractures can be approached with a small incision and using continuous x-rays (fluoroscopy) to help repair the fracture. These are classified as Minimally Invasive and include MIPO (Minimally Invasive Plate Osteosynthesis).

Post-operative Instructions

Strict rest is recommended for the first 4-6 weeks, and usually follow-up x-rays will be taken to evaluate the healing and determine the level of activity allowable after that. Many times there will be a cast or splint placed after the surgery, and these are usually changed every 1-2 weeks until they are no longer needed. Age of the animal, location of the fracture and severity of the injury can all affect the time involved for the fracture to heal. In general, most fractures will heal in a 6-12 week period, but some can take longer. Physical therapy can be beneficial for healing of certain fractures and helping to maintain muscle strength and the surgeon will discuss this on an individual case basis.

Outcome

Surgical stabilization of a fracture decreases pain and allows quicker return to mobility. Most fractures that are repaired surgically can heal without complications and allow return to a normal level of activity once healed. Fractures which involve joint surfaces have an increased chance of developing arthritis over time. Fractures of the spine may involve spinal cord damage which could affect the ability to walk.

Please note that this information does not replace a direct consultation with the patient and all clinical data, with a veterinary surgeon. To schedule an appointment at Animal Specialty and Emergency Center, please call (310) 473-5906.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.acvs.org/small-animal/fractured-limbs>

