

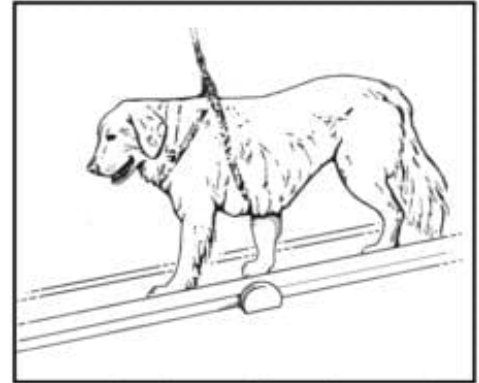
Take Home Instructions: *Incline and Decline Exercises*

What are incline and decline exercises?

An incline exercise involves walking up a hill or slope. A decline exercise involves walking down a hill or slope.

Why are incline and decline exercises prescribed?

Incline and decline exercises strengthen the muscles in your pet's legs. They are easy to do and cause minimal impact on your pet's joints. When a pet walks on an incline, the back legs are exercised by moving the body forward. When the pet walks on a decline, the back legs stretch more and more weight can be put on the front legs. This reduces pain in the back legs. Walking on declines also strengthens the muscles in the front legs.



Ramps placed on a stable surface provide one option for doing incline and decline exercises. Decline exercises help strengthen the muscles of the front legs by holding the weight of the body, as seen here.

Where can I do incline and decline exercises?

Incline and decline exercises can be performed at a variety of outdoor areas, such as sidewalks, local parks, or recreation areas.

What are the exercise guidelines?

Start slowly with gentle inclines and declines. As your pet improves, use steeper and longer inclines and declines. You can also make the exercises more challenging by increasing the length of time you do the exercise and increasing the speed of the walk.¹ Specific guidelines for your pet, including speed, length of walk, duration, and slope, are included below.



Hills also provide a good location for doing incline and decline exercises. As seen here, the dog's back legs will stretch and strengthen as the legs push the body up the hill.

What are the safety considerations?

Always keep your pet on a leash when outside. Watch for signs that your pet is getting tired. If your pet appears to be tiring, take a break and start again at a slower pace. Call us for a revised exercise program if your pet continues to tire easily.

Instructions for your pet:

1. Millis DL, Levine D, Taylor RA. *Canine Rehabilitation & Physical Therapy*. St Louis. 2004. Saunders. p 253.

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