

Take Home Instructions: *Leash Walking Exercises*

What are leash walking exercises?

Leash walking exercises involve taking your pet on a slow and controlled walk.

Why did my veterinarian prescribe leash walking exercises?

Leash walking is the simplest, most convenient, and most important exercise you can do for your pet.¹ It is an exercise that is easy to adapt to your pet's case. It can be easily modified as your pet improves. It also has muscular and heart-health benefits for you and your pet with minimal cost.

Where can I do leash walking exercises?

Leash walking exercises can be performed at a variety of outdoor areas, such as sidewalks, local parks, or recreation areas. We will advise you on how and when you can incorporate hills and ramps to increase the benefits of the exercise. (see Incline and Decline Exercises)

What are the exercise guidelines?

Start slowly. If the pace is too fast, your pet may lift the painful leg to avoid putting weight on the leg or hip. Encourage your pet to use the affected leg by praising him or her for putting the leg on the ground. Leash walking exercises can begin shortly after orthopedic surgery if there are no concerns about putting weight on the affected leg or hip. Start with a slow walk at a comfortable pace for your pet, not for you. In the beginning, the walks should only last two to five minutes two to three times daily.

Do I do the same exercises all of the time?

As your pet improves, use steeper and longer hills.¹ You can also make the exercises more challenging by increasing the length of time of the exercise session and increasing the speed of the walk. Other options for increasing the benefits of the walks include walking with your dog through snow, sand, or tall grass. Specific guidelines designed for your pet, including speed, distance, duration, and slope, are outlined below.



Walking through tall grass strengthens the muscles by encouraging your dog to pick their legs up higher.

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. Bockstahler B, Levine D, Millis D. *Essential Facts of Physiotherapy in Dogs and Cats: Rehabilitation and Pain Management*. Babenhausen, Germany. 2004. BE VetVerlag. p 64.

Information provided by:
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