

Chapter 4

The results indicate mild to moderate HD: what now?

Regular visits to the vet will be necessary, as he or she will be your most important point of contact for information and advice on your dog's condition.

If your dog has been diagnosed with moderate HD, it is important that he stays fit, and has strong, stable muscles.

Absolutely off limits are:

- abrupt changes in direction
- sudden stops
- side-stepping/zig-zagging
- jumping too high
- violent, jerky movements

If your dog wants to race around, make sure that he warms up properly beforehand. When muscles, tendons and ligaments are warmed, it helps to prevent injury. Don't hesitate to intervene if a game becomes too boisterous.

Obstacle courses and tight slalom runs can be problematic. Does the exercise club that you take your dog to offer classes where he doesn't have to jump over obstacles, or wind his way around tightly packed slalom bars? Or perhaps the class could be modified to his needs by getting him to go between every other pole on the slalom run, or making the obstacles higher so that he can run underneath them, rather than jumping over them? If the class is not training for a competition, you should be free to decide which exercises your dog can join in, and which ones it's better to give a miss.

Ask if you can observe a group obedience class and watch what happens. For this special type of training, traditional obedience

TIP

Talk to the trainers about your dog's particular handicap. Maybe you could look for a class which focuses on the individual health problems of each dog? This could involve rehabilitation or an activity group for dogs with disabilities. And if no such group exists, why not start one?



TIP

Give your dog his morning dose of painkiller well before the first walk, so that it has plenty of time to take effect before you go out. The vet can tell you how long this is likely to be, and for how long each dose will be effective, which will allow you to determine the best time to take your dog for a gentle walk.

dog up or down, get him used to lying on a cosy dog mattress on the floor, or provide him with a small ramp (see *Useful accessories*).

Finding a canine physiotherapist

Seek out a canine physiotherapist in your area and have a chat with him or her. Generally speaking, you will receive a recommendation for physiotherapy treatment from your vet or the surgeon after your pet has been discharged.

So, now you're bound to be wondering, why is physiotherapy so important? Any interference with a joint puts stress on all involved tissue structures. During the operation, the surgeon will have moved or stretched muscles, tendons and ligaments (and also removed the remains of the damaged cruciate ligament); the joint capsule will have been opened, and so on. Following surgery, structures and tissue in the area will be traumatised: a violation such as this sets off a chain reaction in the body, which needs to be treated and then gently worked to restore performance. This speeds up the healing process and minimises any damage.

Introduce your dog to the physiotherapist slowly, without causing him any stress or anxiety about the new environment. He

should get to know the therapist ("nice lady") and become familiar with the practice ("smells like dog-interesting stuff"). When, later, he has his operation, after all the strange new things that have happened, he will have something familiar that will help to rebuild his trust in the world again.

During the familiarisation process the therapist may lead him to the trampoline or the fabric tunnel, for example, give him a chance to sniff everything, and maybe have a go on one or two things. He might enjoy it so much that, after his operation and after the stitches have been removed, he looks forward to going back to this fun, (dog-)friendly place.

It is also reassuring for you to know that your dog will be in good hands.

The physiotherapist will tell you what to expect in terms of therapy costs. If you budget your time and money, you'll be able to plan your next steps for the weeks after the operation.

Since you must now limit the length of the walks you take, it's important that your dog is exercised passively. Passive motion stimulates the metabolism in all tissues involved in movement, and promotes blood circulation. Improved blood circulation supplies the cells with more nutrients, which, in turn,

but lives life to the full!

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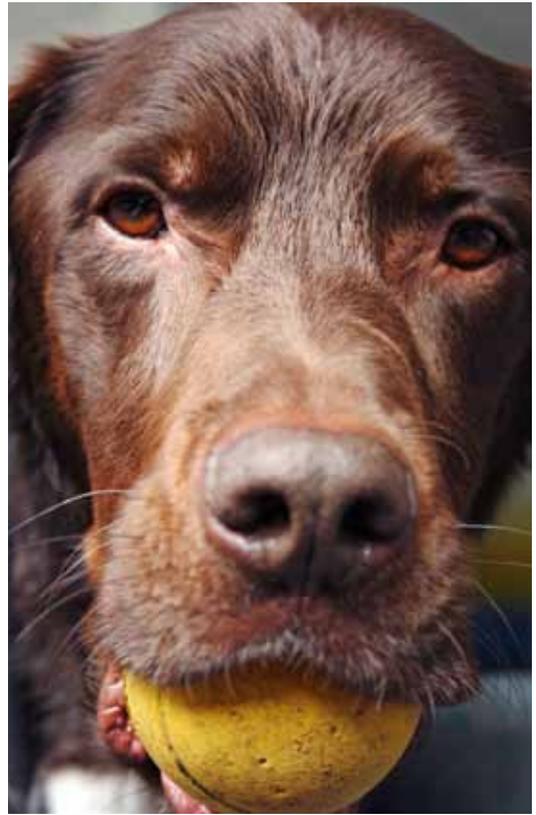
helps prevent stiffening of the joint capsule. Again, a good book such as *The Complete Dog Massage Manual*, published by Hubble and Hattie, has all the relevant information about this technique.

To be on the safe side, ask the physiotherapist to show you how to support your dog without causing any harm during passive movement massage.

Nutrition

Due to the necessary exercise restrictions, your dog's calorie requirements will decrease, and he'll need less food. Your vet can advise on the best way to reduce food intake, without causing any nutrient deficiency in your dog.

Remember to ask for products containing green-lipped mussel



Cracky has a new hip joint.

Case history **CRACKY**



Cracky is a three-year-old Labrador, who has been X-rayed because of a gastrointestinal illness. The pictures are clear, the abdomen is easy to see, but there is an irregularity in the hip. The vet suggests, for safety's sake, a thorough examination of the hips.

The X-rays of the hips show Grade C HD on the right, and Grade D HD on the left. Naturally, Cracky's owners are very shocked. Alarmed by this surprising finding, they watch him very carefully when he playing and exercising, yet can't see anything remarkable. In the autumn, however, when the weather turns cold, Cracky is clearly limping, and, in the morning and after long naps, has a lot of difficulty getting up.

Owner and vet weigh up the different options. Cracky is given light muscle training and NSAIDs (non steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs – these are painkillers without cortisone, which are used in the treatment of rheumatism). Eventually, Cracky gets a new hip joint. Following the operation, his recovery is overseen by a canine physiotherapist.

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techniques are used. Exercises such as searching and retrieving come in many variations, so it never gets boring for the dog. Participants don't work so much on speed, but, instead, the emphasis is on exact execution, so this may be the perfect activity for you and your dog. Activities involving scent-tracking are also ideal.

You could even invite a dog physiotherapist along to the group to explain a few basics, answer questions, and provide information about appropriate training.

Whether or not your pet has HD, swimming is an ideal exercise. The water will support his body weight, allowing him to train his muscles without putting too much stress on the joints. Give him the opportunity

Retrieving and scent-tracking are great ways to train the muscles without putting too much stress on the hip joints.



Swimming is ideal for training the muscles without putting any stress on the joints.

TIP

Some cities have swimming pools for dogs. You could also buy your own dog swimming pool, though these are more suitable for smaller dogs. It's a good idea (and much cheaper) to set up the old paddling pool which your grown-up kids no longer use: pull a squeaky toy along on a string in the water, which your dog can only get by swimming after it. Of course, how long he stays in it depends on the temperature outside, as well as that of the water.



to swim as often as possible, weather permitting.

Does a dog instinctively know what is good for him?

Some people say, "Leave the dog be – he knows what is good for him. He will follow his instincts."

Troll is a seven-year-old Weimaraner with severe HD, who seems to instinctively know what he



Your hands should form a soft and uniform shape during effleurage.



The positive influence that massage has on the circulatory system can help promote healing.

radiation heat the outer layer of the body, ultrasound reaches the deeper layers. The heat generated there reduces muscle tension and pain, and improves circulation, which in turn speeds up the healing process. This therapy improves joint function, and some of the existing stiffness will ease. Depending on the sound intensity used, penetration depth is 1-5cm, which will have a beneficial effect on the joint capsule.

blocks pain signals before they can be received by the brain. You may have seen this device already in your physiotherapist's practice, as it is also used on humans. During a treatment, you will see that the muscle in your dog's leg gently twitches, possibly relieving tension and easing pain, allowing him to relax enough to doze for a while. These minimal movements help build

Electro-therapy (TENS)

TENS (Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation) stimulates the skin using mild electrical impulses on the nerves, and

TENS therapy stimulates the nerves using mild electrical impulses.

