



Purpose of Procedure

Femoral head and neck osteotomy (FHO) is considered a salvage procedure. FHO is performed to restore some normal function to a hip joint that has a problem that cannot be surgically corrected.

FHO is done in dogs and cats that have severe fractures of the hip; hip dysplasia that is not responsive to medical management; degenerative conditions of the hip that are not correctable by other surgical procedures, such as hip dysplasia and Legg-Calves-Perthes disease; or chronic dislocations of the joint. Financial limitations may also influence the decision of whether to perform an FHO.

Because the limb function that results from FHO is less predictable in large and giant breeds, this technique is often reserved for small dogs and cats. However, FHO can result in noticeably improved limb function in approximately 50% of large dogs.



Description of Technique

FHO is a surgical procedure that involves cutting off the femoral head (ball of the thigh bone) that fits into the hip socket. A fibrous (scar) tissue junction then develops between the femur (thigh bone) and the pelvis. This procedure allows improved range of movement of the hip and eliminates the bone-on-bone pain that is often associated with the conditions mentioned. Alternative muscle sling techniques are generally discouraged.

Preparation of Animal

Any underlying problems associated with the original injury or disease must be identified and addressed prior to surgery. Routine laboratory tests are used to identify any risks that may affect general anesthesia. Your veterinarian will provide detailed instructions on withholding food and water prior to surgery.

Potential Complications

Complications include a continued, unacceptable degree of lameness, infection, severe bleeding, and nerve damage. With careful operating technique and proper choice of candidates for the surgery, these complications are uncommon.



Postoperative/Follow-up Care

The incision is inspected daily for evidence of infection (excessive redness, pain, discharge), and the sutures or staples are removed after 10-14 days. The dog or cat is encouraged to use the leg as much as possible and as soon as possible, to enhance the quality of scar tissue that develops at the joint and to preserve as much movement as possible. Dogs that are allowed to carry the leg for the first few weeks often have significant loss of hip motion. Physical rehabilitation therapy often greatly improves the functional outcome.