How do we tell if your dog is a good candidate for THR?

Many factors must be evaluated before your pet is considered a good THR candidate. To decide what is best for your pet, the surgeon will:

- Evaluate your pet’s history.
- Perform a complete physical examination.
- Order radiographs (x-rays) to specifically document abnormalities in the hip joint and choose the proper sized implant.
- Interpret laboratory data to confirm your pet’s general good health and readiness for surgery.

A painful hip that is affecting your dog’s comfort, mobility and activity level is the primary indication for a hip replacement. Stiffness, lameness and reluctance to exercise are often the first signs that there is a more serious hip problem requiring attention.

Only dogs that are skeletally mature (finished growing) can have hip replacement surgery. Growth is typically complete at the age of nine to twelve months. In most dogs, nine months of age is the earliest the THR procedure can be done. There is no upper age limit for the procedure as long as the patient is otherwise in good overall health.

What can be expected from the THR surgery?

Our goal with the THR procedure is to return your pet to pain-free and mechanically sound hip function. The majority of dogs are found to be more comfortable and have significantly improved quality of life following THR. Improvements include:

- Increase in muscle mass.
- Improved hip motion.
- Increased activity levels.
- Hips returned to normal or near normal function.

The MedVet Surgery Department is the most experienced advanced orthopedics team in the Midwest region. Our successful return of pets with orthopedic issues to significantly improved and pain-free activity level is a hallmark of our practice.
The MedVet Surgery Department is comprised of an expert team, including multiple board certified surgeons.

Surgeons board certified by the American College of Veterinary Surgeons have completed a three-year residency program, have met specific training and caseload requirements, performed and had their research published. This process is supervised by current ACVS Diplomates, ensuring consistency in training and adherence to high standards. Once the residency has been completed, the resident must sit for and pass a rigorous examination. Only then does the veterinarian earn the title of ACVS Diplomate.

Frequently Asked Questions

Should I stop giving my dog’s medications before surgery?

- Medications for health conditions such as diabetes or low thyroid function should not be stopped.
- Medications for hip pain can be continued up until surgery.
- Oral steroids should ideally be stopped one week prior to the surgery.

Is surgery performed the day of my first appointment?

No. Your pet must be screened before surgery. This will involve us taking a complete history and performing a thorough physical examination. Additional x-rays of the hip may also be taken. Your pet will be checked for signs of infection, and preoperative blood work may be taken to ensure general good health and readiness for surgery.

What are the potential complications with this surgery?

As with any surgery, THRs have their own set of potential complications, all of which can be successfully addressed if they arise. While very uncommon, the most described complications include:

- Hip joint dislocation.
- Infections.
- Loosening of the implants over time.
- Sciatic nerve injury and fissures developing in the femur (thigh bone) during implantation.

Anesthesia itself carries only a small risk of complications. At MedVet, we have a board certified anesthesiologist who oversees anesthesia in patients undergoing surgery.

What is the success rate of THR?

Over 95% of dogs have had good to excellent function after this procedure, with increased activity and pain-free function being notable.

What is the postoperative care for my dog after Total Hip Replacement?

The postoperative care for your dog is critical following a THR. Activity level must be strictly controlled. For the first month after surgery:

- Your dog should only be let out on a leash to urinate or defecate.
- Your pet should avoid stairs or slippery floors.
- Your dog should not run, jump or play for the first two months after surgery.
- When your dog is not under your direct control, he/she should be kept confined to a small area, cage or crate.

All postoperative restrictions will be discussed in detail and written down for you at the time of your dog’s discharge from MedVet.