



**GRAND AVENUE**  
VETERINARY CLINIC

## PATELLAR LUXATION (DISLOCATION OF THE KNEE CAP)

### Keys Points on Luxated Patellas

- Dislocation of the knee cap is usually not traumatic in dogs; rather, it is usually a congenital condition in small breeds.
- An affected dog will usually skip for several strides, then return to a normal gait when the knee cap pops back into place.
- Surgery is indicated in dogs which fail to use the affected leg a majority of the time..
- Anti-inflammatory drugs are ineffective because this an anatomical problem rather than an inflammatory one.

Small and toy breed dogs are susceptible to a congenital condition called luxated patellas. This is actually a very common condition in these breeds that can cause varying amounts of sometimes intermittent lameness. The purpose of this handout is to discuss this condition and when surgery may be indicated to fix it.

### Pathogenesis

A luxated patella (or dislocated knee cap) is usually caused by a combination of three conditions. First, the groove in which the kneecap rests is shallow. The second is a rotated shinbone, which pulls the patellar tendon and the involved knee cap out of the groove. The third is weak connective tissue that fails to hold the knee cap in the proper position.

This is considered a congenital condition. It has been caused by inbreeding to obtain dogs with certain looks. The miniaturization of the anatomy results in these conditions.

### Diagnosis

Dogs with this condition will usually start by having intermittent lameness. When the knee cap pops out, the dog will skip on three legs for several strides, then return to a normal gait when it pops back in on its own.

Diagnosis of this condition can usually be made on a physical examination. The knee cap may be in or out of the socket, but can be displaced by the doctor. The degree and ease with which it can be displaced, as well as its normal location, will help determine prognosis.

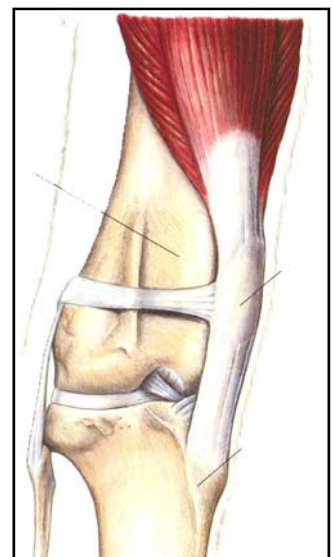
### Treatment

If the knee cap can be displaced but is normally in its appropriate location, we rarely recommend surgery. As long as the dog is using its leg most of the time, we are hesitant to recommend surgical correction.

One of the downsides to this condition is that when the knee cap is dislocated, it will put abnormal stress on the ACL, which can make it susceptible to tearing. If a dog with a luxated patella tears its

ACL, we will usually recommend repair of both conditions.

Surgery will be indicated for dogs that do not use the leg well. Occasionally, this involves a referral to a board-certified surgeon, as in some dogs the anatomy is so small and the surgery so intricate, a specialist's abilities are needed.



The patellar groove on this knee is shallow, and you can see the tibia (shinbone) is rotated inward. A weak lateral patellar ligament adds to the problem, allowing the knee cap to luxate.



## MASSAGE AND PHYSICAL THERAPY FOR KNEE INJURIES

Massage therapy can be one of the most effective means of keeping an arthritic dog feeling good. Improving blood supply to the muscles and stimulation leads to healthy, stronger muscles, which reduces the load that the dog's sore joints need to bear.

In order to consider massage therapy, x-rays need to be taken to confirm the exact joints affected, which allows the therapist to focus on those muscle groups that will benefit the dog best. These films can be performed after a complete physical.

Fortunately, at GAVC we are lucky enough to have several veterinary technicians certified in massage therapy. Our staff has had advanced training in this area and can provide these services, helping your dog be more comfortable and more active.