



# GENERAL CARE FOR EXTERNAL SPLINTS

Your pet has an external splint. This is a rigid material placed around the outside of the limb for the purpose of immobilization and protection. Examples of splints include fiberglass casts, metal splints, plastic splints, and wood splints. These types of splints are most commonly used to support the healing of ligaments and bones after surgery. The splint is very important for the healing process. The amount of time the splint must remain on the limb will vary. This information should be detailed on your pet's discharges. If not, please ask for any specific details concerning the splint. There are, however, general principles for care of all external splints. Please follow these steps:

- Check the toes (if visible) **daily for swelling**. This is particularly important 24 to 48 hours after the splint is applied. If the splint is too constricting, circulation will be impaired and the toes will be swollen. If this occurs please contact us as soon as possible.
- Examine the splint **daily for signs of irritation and/or infection**. Check the top and bottom of the splint. The skin may appear reddened and your pet may be licking or chewing at this area. There may also be areas of irritation under the splint which are not visible. Your pet may lick and chew at the splint over these areas as well. In addition, you may notice a foul odor or discharge coming from the splint. If any of these problems occur, please contact us immediately. These are signs of a possible infection. Infection under the splint can lead to deformity and loss of function.
- Keep the splint **clean and dry**. Cover it with a plastic bag to protect against outdoor moisture and urine when going on short trips outside. Remove the bag upon returning indoors. If the splint becomes wet, a moist irritating dermatitis may result and the splint will have to be changed.
- **Check the splint for slippage or looseness**; please call us if you detect any. We will probably want to check the splint and possibly re-apply it. As a rule you should have us check the splint at least once every week to two weeks.
- Limit your pet's activity to **supervised exercise on a leash only** while he/she has the splint on. Protection against movement is important for healing. Please enforce rest until complete healing has occurred. We realize this is difficult, but it is the most important part of the healing process.