# Partial lateral corpectomy

Decompression for selected chronic back disc problems | Dogs

**Some discs bulge slowly and compress the spinal cord from below. Partial lateral corpectomy creates an access route through the side of the vertebral bodies to remove this material.**

## About the procedure

### What is chronic disc compression?

A disc can gradually thicken or bulge into the spinal canal, often over months. The spinal cord has little room to move away from the pressure. Affected dogs may stumble, wear their hind claws, struggle to rise or become increasingly weak. Pain may be mild or substantial. More than one disc can be involved.

### Why is advanced imaging needed?

CT helps identify the position of the affected disc, but MRI will show the extent and effects of the compression and any other spinal disorders. The surgeon checks whether the signs match the scan: not every abnormal-looking disc causes symptoms. Surgical planning uses the actual images rather than X-rays alone.

### What does the operation involve?

The surgeon removes a limited amount of bone from the side of two neighbouring vertebral bodies around the diseased disc. This allows access to material lying below or to the lower side of the spinal cord, without having to move the cord as much. Only part of the vertebral bodies is removed. A hemilaminectomy or stabilising implants may be added in selected cases.

### Why not use a standard hemilaminectomy?

The best route depends on the exact location and consistency of the material. A side opening may not provide adequate access to firm chronic compression underneath the cord. Medical management, rehabilitation or another decompression or stabilisation may be better for some dogs. Corpectomy is not the routine choice for every slipped disc.

# Partial lateral corpectomy

Recovery, risks and home care

## Recovery and home care

### Expected outcome

The aim is to improve or preserve walking and reduce discomfort. Longstanding spinal cord injury may not recover fully. Some dogs remain weak, and other diseased discs may cause new problems.

### More common or important ongoing problems

Temporary worsening of movement, persistent wobbliness or pain, wound swelling and recurrent neurological signs are recognised. Recovery can be slower when the compression has existed for a long time.

### Less common but potentially serious complications

Bleeding around the spine, cord or nerve injury, incomplete decompression, renewed disc compression, infection and weakening or instability of the operated vertebrae may occur. Stabilising implants can also fail or cause injury. Further surgery or prolonged nursing may be needed.

### Home nursing and activity

Keep your dog in a safe padded area on non-slip flooring – cage rest is essential after this procedure. Use short supported toilet trips only as directed. Avoid jumping, stairs and uncontrolled exercise. Monitor urination and keep the skin dry if the hind legs are weak. If implants were placed, follow their additional restrictions. Physiotherapy should begin as soon as possible.

### Follow-up and recovery

A wound review and repeat neurological assessment are commonly needed within 10–14 days. Rehabilitation and restrictions often continue for many weeks. If stabilisation was used, imaging may be required to assess the repair. Improvement may take months; persistent or new signs can require repeat MRI or CT.

### When to contact the practice

Report increased pain, loss of previously regained movement, difficulty urinating, feverish illness or a draining wound. Sudden paralysis, breathing difficulty or collapse require emergency veterinary attention.

### Questions to ask your vet

Why is corpectomy preferable for this disc? Might stabilisation be needed? What improvement is realistic given the duration of signs?

### Discussing risks and complications

As with any surgical procedure, complications can occur. Your surgeon will discuss the possible complications, individual risks and expected outcome for your pet during the pre-operative consultation.

General anaesthesia can cause serious complications, including death. Your veterinary team will explain individual risks and alternatives.

### Important information

Follow the personalised discharge plan; this sheet is not a consent form. Contact your own practice or its out-of-hours service for urgent care.