



## BED REST AKA CRATE REST



Before getting started, we'd like you to know that we DO know that confining a dog to bed rest is not easy. We have been there! Some of us have done it 4 times with our dogs. Without any doubt, it takes tough love on our part to give our dogs the very best opportunity to get better. It is probably harder on us than it is on them – maybe! Ha Ha!! We also know the importance that bed rest plays in allowing a dog to recover and have read many stories of dogs that had relapses very quickly who did not get strict bed rest. With that in mind, let's get started helping you help your dog.

After getting your dog to the vet and started on medications quickly, the next most important thing you can do to help its body heal and prevent further spinal cord damage is to strictly limit your dog's activity in a bed rest den commonly called crate rest.

### WHY IS BED REST NEEDED?

A disc that has weakened and developed tears on the outer edges allows inner disc material to bulge out onto the spinal cord causing mild compression, trauma, pain and nerve damage. Just normal walking moves the vertebrae which moves the discs sitting in between them and can cause the disc to develop more tears resulting in a rupture.

When the tears become big enough, the inner disc material oozes or ruptures violently out onto the spinal cord or downward into nerve bundles causing severe spinal cord compression, trauma, inflammation, nerve damage and often paralysis. Strictly limiting the dog's movement helps prevent more disc material from causing even more spinal cord damage.

The disc must develop scar tissue so that more disc material doesn't continue to escape out onto the spinal cord and/or nerve bundles. It takes approximately 3 weeks to start forming scar tissue and at least 6 weeks before it reaches its maximum strength. Ever cut your knuckle and notice



that because you keep bending that knuckle the cut starts to bleed again because the scar tissue was loosened? The very same theory applies to an intervertebral disc trying to heal by building scar tissue. The medications don't help the body build scar tissue; it's all up to the dog's body to do these repair jobs.

Interested in learning more?

Vet Specialists of Rochester

<http://vetspecialistsofrochester.com/pdf/UnderstandingIntervertebralDiscDiseaseInDogs.pdf>

Animal Medical Center of Southern California

<http://www.animalmedcenter.com/faqs/category/intervertebral-disc-disease>

Sturgis Veterinary Hospital

<http://www.sturgisvet.com/smallanimalclinic/faqsaboutdiskdisease.html>

## SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED

- Not all dogs do well in a traditional wire crate so choose one that your dog will do best in but still strictly limit its movement. You can choose from a traditional wire crate, an ex-pen (wire or plastic), a pack n play, a crib, a soft-sided crate or a very small area of your home you block off in some way so that your dog only has enough room to stand up, turn around easily, and stretch out fully and comfortably plus a water bowl. A stroller may be used if it is very sturdy, big enough for the dog to stretch out completely, can be zipped up and secured, and the dog is never left unattended in one. The size of the bed rest den should be big enough for your dog to stand up, turn around easily, and stretch out fully and comfortably in plus have room for some water and a meal dish. The size of the bed rest den should be approximately 1.5 times the length of your dog and the width should be approximately the length of your dog. So, for a dog approx 20 inches long, a good size for the bed rest den would be 30 inches long by 20 inches wide. If there is too much room, you can simply pad out the extra space with rolled up towels or blankets.





- Bedding: Memory foam or eggcrate is the best as it is very supportive but not too firm or too soft. You can get a twin-size human mattress topper at discount stores (like Wal-Mart) inexpensively and then cut it to fit the dimensions of your bed rest den. Depending on how thick the memory foam or eggcrate is, you can stack several on top of each other and secure them with duct tape.
- Large garbage bag: Now put the memory foam/egg crate bedding into a large garbage bag and tape it shut with duct tape.
- Human potty pads: Next put a human potty pad on top of the bedding in the trash bag.
- Pieces of fleece material: Now wrap the bedding with the human potty pad with two pieces of inexpensive fleece you can buy at any fabric store or even discount stores like Wal-Mart. Or you can buy inexpensive fleece throws and cut them up into smaller pieces big enough to wrap around the bedding.

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How does it work!?! If you dog has a potty accident (which happens), the fleece wicks away the urine from the dog's body so it isn't laying in urine soaked bedding, the pee pad catches and holds it, and the garbage bag keeps the basic bedding safe and dry. Plan on having plenty of extra fleece pieces on hand to make clean-up quick and easy.





## HOW TO PICK UP AND CARRY YOUR DOG

Place one hand under its chest and one hand under the belly or through the rear legs and lift straight up while keeping the dog's back straight and level. Bring them up to your chest and then carry them horizontally with their front legs resting and your arm and your other arm wrapped tightly around their middle.



Here is a video to show you how to properly pick up your dog and support it while being carried: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y91s2SqOKYE>

## HOW STRICT IS BED REST?

The stricter, the better. Yes, you do need to keep your dog in the bed rest den 24/7 except for potty times. He/she should eat in their bed rest den too because all sorts of things could happen outside the safety of the den such as a doorbell on TV, the real doorbell at your home, another dog barks nearby, the UPS truck drives by and honks the horn, and many other things too. Any of those things will make your dog decide it absolutely has to respond to the threat and off they will run or drag themselves. Don't be fooled into thinking if your dog is paralyzed that they wouldn't try to go after a perceived threat because they will! They do not care one bit that their back legs don't work!! They can move pretty darn fast too!!

## POTTY BREAKS

Carry them out to the potty area very carefully. You will want to use a harness and leash to control them unless a harness and leash causes too much excitement because they associate the harness with going for a walk. In that case, using an ex-pen outside or putting up garden fencing to make a 6-foot designated potty area will work best. An ex-pen or garden fencing



potty area gives them a visual and physical boundary which tells them that there is no place to run, nothing to chase, and no sniff fest to have. Nothing for them to do but potty!

Put them down and let them sniff around to get inspiration only allowing the minimum steps to get the potty jobs done. If your dog is wobbly or paralyzed, you will want to use a sling to support their rear end and keep their back straight and level. A sling can be anything from a men's neck tie, a rolled-up woman's scarf, to a very thin and narrow piece of sheet or inexpensive fleece blanket. You want it long enough so that you can stand straight up and not have to bend over. Slip it under their belly close to the rear legs. If your dog is just wobbly simple keep the sling taut enough to give them support and help give them more stability while walking. If they are paralyzed, hold the sling taut so that just enough to ensure that their back is level – not up like a wheel barrel. They will be able to move using their front legs.

Potty breaks during bed rest are not sniff fest opportunities. So, if your dog doesn't go potty within a few minutes, no more than 4 or 5, then pick them up and carry them back in and try again in about an hour or so. If your dog is taking a steroid such as Dexamethasone, Prednisone, or Prednisolone etc, you will need to take them out more often as these drugs cause the kidneys to expel more urine than it normally does and so the dog will need to urinate more often such as every 3 to 4 hours and sometimes as often as every 2 hours.

### HOW LONG IS BED REST?

Most knowledgeable vets recommend 6 to 8 weeks of strict bed rest depending on the severity of your dog's disc episode. You will want to discuss this with your vet to ensure that your dog gets the maximum benefit in order to ensure the best recovery. Rule of thumb: the longer the better! Too much doesn't hurt your dog but too little can easily cause a relapse within a short time.

### MANAGING BEHAVIOR

Some dogs handle confinement in bed rest very well and stay calm while others do not! Most all of them will try to figure out our sympathy meters and how much they can manipulate us!! LOL. They are crafty and sly. Seriously!! Dogs are smart and will continue to do what they have found to be effective before. Not only are they master manipulators, but they are also experts at watching human behavior and learning quickly what gets them what they want, which in this case is attention or out of the bed rest



den. At this point, attention to them is just about anything - even negative attention i.e. being yelled at. So, when the whining starts, if you look in their direction, speak to them, or go over to the bed rest den will spell success in their book. Here is what they learned: if they continue to do it more and more and increase the volume and frequency, they are likely to get what they want. It brought success before didn't it?!

What you need to try to do the best you can is when the whining, barking, or screaming starts, leave the room and ignore them. When they get quiet, praise them lavishly and perhaps give them a small low-calorie treat. The idea is to train them that being quiet gets rewarded and NOT being quiet gets them nothing. As the pack leader, it is up to YOU to retrain the behavior and not give in to their attempts at getting you to do something they want.

They take cues from our behavior and mimic it. It will help if you act like it is completely normal that they are in there and don't let them see your sad face or you crying. They may misunderstand and believe they have done something wrong. You don't want that! Keep your chin up and stay upbeat! If you need to cry, go into the bathroom and turn on the water. When you are done, come out with a smile on your face and in your voice and tell your sweet one that everything is going to be just fine. A positive energy environment promotes healing!

## CALMERS

Not all dogs adapt well to being confined and despite all of our behavioral modification attempts, they simply will not calm down and rest which is counterproductive to healing. Sometimes natural or prescription calmers can help. Here are some of the common non-prescription options:

Anxitane based on L-Theanine:

<http://tinyurl.com/4x5yfcw>

Calm Discovery Liquid which also contains L-Theanine and colostrum:

<http://www.accentonpethealthcare.com/calm.html>

Composure Soft Chews based on colostrum:

<http://www.vetriscience.com/composure-soft-dogs-MD-LD.php>

DAP Pheromones:

<http://www.petcomfortzone.com/>

[www.k9backpack.com](http://www.k9backpack.com) facebook: /TheK9BackPack

twitter: @k9backpack pinterest: /k9backpack



Composure Soft Chews and DAP Pheromones used together may be most effective.

Rescue Remedy Pets:

<http://www.bachflower.com/rescue-remedy-pets-bach-flower/>

Benadryl (diphenhydramine): Contact your vet to ensure safe to use and for dosage.

<http://www.petmd.com/pet-medication/benadryl#.UVXpD1dvCE8>

## TIME AND PATIENCE

Time and patience are two of the critical ingredients in the magic of healing. The others are strict bed rest and good medical management all wrapped up with your love. Healing is not a fast process. It can take months and even a year or more for nerves heal. The body has so many repair jobs to do and it does it very gradually and slowly. You may see some improvement in leg function initially and then not see any more noticeable improvement for a while. You may not see any return of leg function during the 6 to 8 weeks of bed rest but after bed rest is over, you can begin physical therapy in which your dog makes good improvements.

Don't get discouraged! Your dog's body is doing the best job it can to recover and regain the most ability it possibly can. Have faith in the body's miraculous ability to heal. Remember: "NEVER say NEVER!!" Keep HOPE in your heart. HOPE will give you strength!! No matter whether your dog ends up walking a little wobbly or needs some wheels to chase squirrels in, your dog will be happy and loving life just the same!

Take care of yourself too. Your dog needs you to stay as healthy mentally, emotionally, and physically as you can in order to care for them.

*Stay strong!*