

Our approach to the elbow dysplasia

Elbow dysplasia is an umbrella name covering a range of elbow pathology. In the vast majority of cases, elbow dysplasia affects the 'inside' part of the joint, the medial side.

One could classify the elbow dysplasia in two groups: focal and diffuse.

Focal lesions are limited to a certain part of the elbow called the medial coronoid. These lesions can be traumatic or as a consequence of an underlying problem. Diffuse lesions involve the whole medial side of the joint and are a consequence of mismatch between the bones of the elbow. Of course, these conditions are not entirely separated and can coexist in various combinations.

As elbow dysplasia is a developmental disease, it seems that early screening may help improve long term outcomes. Early screening implies xrays of the elbows at the age of 4 months old – please see our hip sheet as well. In some cases, repeating the xrays at 5 or 6 months old may be necessary.

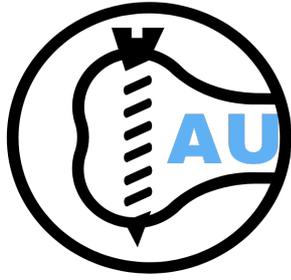
Our elbow dysplasia managing protocol is focused on age groups as follows:

- for dogs with radiographic signs of elbow dysplasia at 4-6 month old – distal ulna ostectomy (DUO)
- for dogs with radiographic and/or clinical signs of elbow dysplasia at 6-14 month old – arthroscopy and proximal ulna osteotomy (PUO)
- for dogs older than 14 month old, with elbow dysplasia – proximal abducting ulna osteotomy (PAUL)
- for dogs with elbow dysplasia and osteoarthritis and are not responsive to medication – canine unicompartmental elbow resurfacing (CUE)

Please see our separated sheets for the above procedures.

It is very important to understand that elbow dysplasia means 'badly design elbow'. Although studies have shown improvement or slowing down of the clinical signs, it is very important to realise that a dysplastic elbow will never be normal again. This means that all our efforts are focused on improving the outcomes, provide a comfortable life and a good quality of life.

It is only total elbow replacement that would, potentially, restore the full functionality of the elbow. However, the current systems of elbow replacement have an high complication rate with potential disastrous effects.



Postoperative care for elbow procedures

Please see our postoperative sheets for 'General orthopaedic' and 'Postoperative recovery' sheets as well.

After any elbow procedure strict rest is required. This means that for the initial 6 weeks postoperative, your dog should not be allowed upstairs, on the furniture, chasing the postman etc. He/she should be walked and walking should be done on a lead. Running, jumping, trotting etc are not allowed.

As your pet is very likely to be lame after elbow surgery, painkillers and anti-inflammatory drugs will be prescribed on a case by case basis.

Follow up checks should be arranged with your vet usually 3 and 10 days postoperative. These checks are done for incision assessment. Following these checks, regular re-assessments should be arranged, usually 4, 8 and 12 weeks postoperative.

Follow up xrays are recommended 4-6 weeks postoperative. In some situations, another set of xrays may be recommended 10-12 weeks postoperative.

