

Frequently Asked Questions

I want to personally thank you for seeking my services for your companion. With the correct healing solution I see what many would call miraculous results almost daily in my practice. If you have been to www.KellyThompsonDC.com and seen my before and after videos you will understand why we say this. I have seen just about every kind of Neuro-Musculo-Skeletal (nerve-muscle-skeleton) condition that can happen to pets in my 35 years of continuous animal practice. This wealth of experience has allowed me to put together this collection of important information to ensure that the time and investment in your Pet's health will be well spent and will yield dividends of happy pain free living for years to come. So please take the time to read and take to heart the information that I have provided for you.

How soon should I expect to see improvement in my Pet's condition?

Since I am in the business of relieving pain and suffering my goal is always, "as soon as possible!" However, our main goal is to correct the underlying problem. In other words, what's causing your pet's symptoms, and with your help prevent your companion's condition from returning.



For most pet owners seeking my care, the current episode of pain or incapacity their pet is suffering from is but the latest in a string of longer lasting and incrementally worse episodes and they have come to realize, as depicted using an "Iceberg" metaphor you see here, that just masking or covering up the pain or inflammation with Meds hasn't stopped the progression of their companion's underlying

condition. If this is your companion's first episode consider yourself lucky and ahead of the curve.

Further, sometimes the first symptom is the culmination



of years of micro trauma. Like, "the straw that broke the camel's back." Or "the final snowflake that sets off the avalanche."

For the vast majority of Pet Owners who seek my help, their companion's malady was not caused by some unanticipated accident but purely by years of cumulative micro-traumatic events that were part of their activities of daily living. The

Dachshund who energetically leaps off of the couch or bed countless times per day causing shock and trauma to their spine with each impact. The pet owner who plays vigorous tug-of-war with his pup regularly, even holding his companion up off of the ground by his tug toy to impress friends and neighbors. How about the Golden Retriever who charges the fence, violently impacting with his front paws to fence fight with the neighbor dog numerous times per day or chase that pesky squirrel up that fence and out of the yard. What about that pup who pops that heavy magnetized rubber dog door open countless times per day with his muzzle causing shock and trauma to his lower cervical spine. Then there's that fuzzy faced Shih Tzu who runs her muzzle along the carpet, both sides, to wipe the residue from meals off of her whiskers day in, day out, month in, month out, and year in, year out. Are you getting the picture? This said, each patient is unique and even patients with similar conditions may respond very differently depending on many internal factors such as age, health, genetic anomalies, chronicity of the problem, severity of the injury or condition etc., and external factors that ultimately are what you and your pet have been doing to cause this problem over time.

When you get to, "***What can I do to help speed my pet's recovery?***" Section of this FAQ you will understand this better.

Now that you understand the aforementioned, the usual response to the treatment session is that your pet may

seem a little bit worse after the treatment for 12 to 36 hours, depending on the age of your dog, especially if we affected a lot of changes to their internal structure. Do you recall how you felt after getting your braces tightened each visit to the Orthodontist or after a deep tissue massage? Fear not, this is part of healing. The day of the treatment they will generally be **very tired**, sometimes sleeping on the way home and often for the rest of the day. Lamé dogs may limp a bit more temporarily after being treated. The question in most people's minds is, "why?" There are two answers to this. First, they may feel very tired because their body is trying to heal and their body's energy is being used for that process. Do you recall being very tired just preceding and during a sickness, or after an injury? Maybe even bed ridden? As you heal or recover, the normal energy you experience to perform all the activities of daily living is being usurped for the processes involved with healing until your body has once again reached a level of homeostasis, i.e. recovers. Your body needs rest to heal and stimulating your Dog's healing response creates the same effect. Second, accelerating the healing response with light therapy increases sensation and awareness of the injury. They will feel it more. In other words "Accelerated healing means accelerated feeling!" So let your companion's body dictate what it needs. If they are reluctant to go on a long walk and would rather stay home and rest then that is what their body is telling them and you.

So to answer the original question, we expect to see what I call internal changes or improvement that I can feel with my hands in 2 to 3 visits. This includes improvements in alignment, motion and function, swelling, inflammation, sensitivity, etc. I expect to see external changes or improvement that can be seen by you within 4 to 6 visits. This includes improvements in comfort, general behavior and attitude, motion or movement, control and coordination, more normal stretching behavior, increased activity level etc. It is also not unusual to see improvement after just one visit.

Dr Thompson my dog came to you weak or paralyzed in the hind end? I'm hoping you can help them. What can I do at home to help them recover?

First some facts about paralyzed pets. If you have seen my many before and after videos at www.kellythompsondc.com then you are one of the many pet owners

who have sought my services to help their companion to walk normally again. As an aside, this condition sadly is much more common than you might realize. In fact I believe this is one of the leading causes of death in older animals. Older Pets just start getting weaker and weaker in their hind legs. They begin to leak urine or have fecal accidents in the house and so forth. Then you get the "quality of life" lecture from your Vet. Which is one very short step away from their final resting place at Memorial Park. It is my job to either return your pet to normal function or in older dogs, worst case, to arrest their decline so they eventually pass on due to some other cause.

Now, many of you have already been to the Veterinary Neurologist and been told that your pet requires a very expensive back surgery and insists that they perform an MRI immediately. Here are the facts about spinal surgery. In my many years of helping animals the only true surgical emergency is when they are paralyzed, their legs are completely "lifeless," and your Vet during examination, using their fingers or forceps, pinches the knuckle of a rear paw hard and there is zero response or awareness on the part of the patient. This is called the loss of **Deep Pain Sensation**. In other words even if normal sensation is lost and they can't get up and walk as long as they can feel someone pinching the bone firmly then surgery is **not** time critical and other more conservative therapies can be attempted without the fear of missing the critical surgical time window that these worst case conditions necessitate.

Also, the outcomes of spinal surgeries in animals are nowhere near 100%. In fact not even close. If asked the Veterinary Neurologist will probably tell you that it's a 50/50 proposition that your companion will ever walk normally again. In truth what I have seen over the years is that it is much worse than this, in that only roughly a third in time regain normal function. Roughly another third remain the same or regain some degree of function, but nowhere close to normal. Finally, roughly a third of the cases become worse, in that if they weren't already completely paralyzed prior to the surgery, they move closer to or become totally paralyzed following the spinal surgery. I can't tell you how many times I've seen heart stricken pet owners bringing their companions into the clinic, their backs shaved from the prior surgery, and dozens of surgical clips tracing up their spines like so many "train tracks," only to watch them subsequently breakdown,

tears welling up in their eyes as they walk out through the clinic doors one last time without their loved ones. These are the hard facts.

So if your companion has not lost deep pain sensation there is definitely hope for your loved one. However in paralysis cases patience is definitely a virtue. Don't expect an overnight miracle. Healing and recovery take one step at a time and sometimes it's two steps forward and one step backward.

Sorry to be longwinded. Those of you who have gone through this with a prior pet know exactly what I'm saying here. For those of you experiencing this for the first time and somehow resisted the pressure to put your companion under the knife you now have a "look behind the curtain," when it comes to paralyzed pets.

That said the following recommendations will help you care for your injured pup at home.

1. The most important thing you can do is to keep them from being re-injured. This is paramount. Stop all situations where impacts might occur. So they shouldn't be on the couch or bed where they can easily fall and further damage the spine or exacerbate their condition. Don't allow other dogs to slam into them or jump on their back. No dragging themselves down a flight of stairs, "bumpity, bumpity, bump," all the way down to the first floor.

2. When lifting them make sure you use both arms to keep their spine from bending (aka roaching) upwards. Keep their spine flat, straight, and stretched as you can when carrying.

3. If I have indicated that the cause is in their neck, then read the hand out labelled recovering from neck injuries I referred you to in this client section below this FAQ and commit to memory all the things to be avoided.

4. Generally speaking most of the time you don't have to worry about them going "number 2." The body takes care of this on its own because it is controlled by a different nerve pathway than the bladder. "Number 1," is of more of a concern and if they can't seem to go Pee, then we can show you how to "Express" their bladder to assist them in voiding the bladder. This is called Neurogenic Bladder Dysfunction or a Neurogenic bladder. It should be emptied at least 3 times per

day. More if they are on a steroid that increases their consumption of water. The good and bad news is as they improve they will begin to leak or pee without conscious control. This leads us to number 5.

5. Keeping them clean is vitally important. If you leave the urine on the skin for long periods it will scald or burn their skin badly. Not good! You can pick up "waterless shampoo" at your Veterinarian or pet supply store. You can use baby wipes as well. Clean them frequently. Do not use zinc oxide based creams commonly used for baby diaper rash. It is toxic when licked. Pick up lots of Pee pads at the pet supply store. Consider doggy diapers. You can get human baby diapers of the appropriate size and cut a hole in it for the tail for females. For males you can wrap it around them like a cummerbund keeping the "business end" of their privates inside the diaper. Another concern is tissue eating fly maggots! If you leave them outside sitting in their poop it takes no time for flies to lay eggs and now you have a very serious problem on your hands. So keep them clean as a "baby's bottom."

6. Bed sores or decubitus ulcers. It is important to not let them lay on one side only for hours on end. Since in most cases they are unable to feel anything they won't be aware of pressure points and the effects they cause. A tempopedic dog bed helps to spread the pressure out and can limit this problem. Otherwise flip them if they can't do it themselves.

7. Bladder infections and UTI's. (Urinary Tract Infections) A bad side effect of being paralyzed is that it is very common for paralyzed pets to develop a UTI sometime during their recovery. Dragging themselves around on the lawn to pee brings their urinary tract in close proximity to bacteria in the dirt and grass and they can easily migrate into your pup's body. Compounding this is the fact that very often your pup has been put on corticosteroids like prednisone to reduce inflammation. While suppressing inflammation it also suppresses the immune system making them more susceptible to Bacterial infections. How does one know if their companion has developed a UTI. First, you will often notice that their Urine smells strong and acrid when they have developed an infection. Normally you shouldn't smell a dog's urine much standing above them as they urinate, so if you are really smelling it suddenly think UTI. Second, If they were seen improving and suddenly they look like they have lost ground suddenly and significantly then think UTI. This

has always been puzzling to me over the years that a UTI would cause increased neurologic problems, but it definitely does. However that is what I immediately jump to when in the absence of any re-injury they suddenly seem like they are back to square one. Generally a round of antibiotics and they regain their lost ground almost overnight. So if you notice a change in odor or coloration of their urine let us know.

8. Helping them to stand and walk. I have seen pet owners over the years lifing their paralyzed companions with a sort of belly band or towel in front of the rear legs. I do not recommend this method because of the stress this places on their abdomen and spine. I also don't recommend that you bend over to hold them up. This is bad for your back. We only need one injured back not two. Look up "Walkabout Dog Harnesses," on the internet. It fits on like a pair of pants with a long strap handle above thier pelvis for you to hold them up in an ergonomic position for the both of you. We encourage you to take them out to exercise them once they are ready. Talk to us about when your pup is ready for this.

Lastly, so you will understand the milestones as they recover I will go over the stages of recovery. The first thing to go and the last thing to be regained in these cases is control and coordination. So if your companions condition came on over the course of days you will have noticed at first they started getting wobbly and uncoordinated in the rear legs, almost like a "drunken sailor." They may at first be able to stand up but very unsteadily. If it continues to progress they will suddenly be unable to stand up at all. If it worsens they often begin pulling themselves along the floor by their front legs with their back legs sort of pointing forward or to the side as they move. This indicates that they retain some muscle tone in the rear legs, primarily the muscles that control hip movement. If they begin to pull themselves forward by the front legs while dragging their rear legs that now just point straight back, limp and lifeless then this is complete paralysis. Further if you try pinching the knuckle of one of the rear paws hard and they have no reaction at all then sadly your pup has progressed to rock bottom neurologically. This is the worst case scenario and is called loss of deep pain sensation. In the vast majority of cases that have reached this level of neurologic compromise surgery is stongly indicated. However, I had one case named Franky (one of my videos shows Franky) that had lost deep pain sensation but the own-

ers couldn't afford the \$10,000 surgery. Eventually she recovered fully. See the video for yourself.

So they will recover in the reverse order of how they went down hill as expressed in the prior paragraph. More precisely when talking about paralyzed rear legs, they will regain muscle strength in the muscles that control movement involving the hip joint, followed by muscles that control movement involving the knee joint, followed by muscles that control movement involving the hock or ankle joint and finally the muscles that move the toes will regain strength. This is how nerves heal from, "proximal to distal." That is from the nearest to farthest. I have had great success with getting paralyzed pets walking again. In fact my very first animal patient in 1983 was a paralyzed dachshund who was stated to be euthanized and I got him back walking again. So don't give up hope!

How long will it take for my pet to make a stable correction or recovery?

Although paralyzed pets can take much longer, on average it takes between 6 and 12 visits to bring most pets to a point where they have recovered with stability. By this I mean that the underlying cause of their condition or malady has been rehabilitated or resolved to the point that active care can be discontinued without fear of slow or rapid relapse. However, roughly 10% to 15% of the cases resolve sooner than 6 visits and roughly the same percentage of cases can take longer than 12 visits. Sometimes much longer. It's all about rehabilitation and it takes time to make stable recovery. It is very important to understand that as with stopping antibiotics prematurely, quitting your pet's program prior to this stable point will ensure in time that their condition will recur as they lose what they had gained.

Dr. Thompson, what special training is involved with treating animals?

Over the years as a Chiropractor I have treated everything from Horses and Llamas to dogs, cats, rabbits, chinchillas and even guinea Pigs. Pet owners often ask if I attended some special training. The answer is, that part of me wishes that there had been someone who was expert in this field back in 1983 when I was confronted with my first paralyzed Dachshund who was slated to be euthanized. However, at the time the

only information I could find in my profession were vague rumors along the Chiropractic grapevine about some doctors treating Thoroughbreds in Kentucky. I tried in vain to find someone who could advise me. The other part of me is thankful there wasn't anyone teaching when I started, since so many of the vital discoveries I have made in my own right might have been missed by blindly following someone else's protocols and deferring to their knowledge base, especially in difficult cases that were not responding. Instead of thinking outside the box, trying something different, and working to find a healing solution, I might have just chocked it up to, "I did the best I could with what I know, but your Pet's condition is beyond what I can help. I'm very sorry."

My first success getting that paralyzed Doxie walking again yielded a fairly steady stream of what I called the "basket cases" from open minded Vets suggesting to the owners that they contact Dr. Thompson as a last resort before "putting their companion to sleep." The genesis of my many discoveries was born of the heavy emotional yoke that comes with being, in so many cases, the last one standing between someone's beloved companion and their final resting place at Memorial Park. It was and continues to be a harsh task master, but since I had no one to turn to for solutions for difficult cases over the years, one which caused me to search often frustratingly and exhaustively for frequently elusive solutions. If you ever saw the movie, "Lorenzo's Oil," you can appreciate what its like to have no one to turn to when searching for solutions to difficult, heartbreaking cases.

In cases that were not responding as predicted I had to think outside the contemporary knowledge base of human manipulative theory and practice. As my palpation skills improved and my tactile sensory acuity vastly increased over time I found things that I had previously passed over and missed, or discovered patterns in numerous cases that I initially didn't realize the significance of.

Many of my findings have no compliment in human practice and are yet to be described in the rather vast compendium of Chiropractic or Osteopathic manipulative theory and practice. My technique has changed dramatically since my first case in the fall of 1983. Most Chiropractors observing my methods don't recognize my protocols as resembling anything they have ever seen before. But through trial and error, suc-

cesses and failures, what has evolved over the decades produces results that speak for themselves. I believe my Yelp reviews are testimony to this fact. I tell you this not to self aggrandize or make myself out to be "Albert Schweitzer" or some such thing, but merely to give you perspective on the long but rewarding road I have traveled to bring this form of gentle, non-invasive care to your loved one.

Today there are weekend seminars out there that have sprung up to fill the need to teach Chiropractors and Veterinarians. New practitioners just learning will frequently use methods akin to "killing a fly with a sledge hammer." Additionally there are a few Veterinary schools offering Chiropractic programs. Sadly most are stronger on basic theory than they are on technique. The bottom line from one who knows, is that there are few things in life as difficult to learn and master as what is called, "Musculoskeletal Manipulation," or MSM and this is especially true concerning animals. Human patients can tell you where they hurt, what might have caused their injury or condition, and what movements or positions make their condition feel better or worse. Animals will frequently do their utmost to hide their injuries or conditions from you. Owners often have no clue how their pet's problem happened or what might have caused it. Moreover, detecting the very subtle changes in alignment and function that tell the Doctor where and how to treat are frequently obscured during examination (called palpation), by a "blizzard" of other sensory inputs to the examiner's fingers. Patients move about, wiggling this way and that, pulling away, and generally holding their postural muscles tight, as they guard against the perceived threat of the examiner's fingers. It is a highly perishable skill that even a two week vacation from results in a noticeable deterioration in tactile sensory acuity.

Dr. Thompson, your technique seems nothing like what I've experienced at my Chiropractor.

This is often confusing to owners who are long time Chiropractic patients themselves. I guess they were expecting something more rough or dramatic. Dogs and cats are extremely flexible in the spine and other articulations as evidenced by the fact that they are able to twist around and chew on their behinds. I have yet to see one of my fellow humans perform such a maneuver and this explains how corrections can be made

gently, painlessly, and non-invasively.

You will notice that while I treat your companion that I use both hands, to diagnose and treat. You will also notice I work on much more than your pet's spine. Additionally you will further notice that I always have two hands on your companion when I'm palpating or diagnosing. It isn't to hold them still or keep them from running off. One hand literally listens and perceives the extremely subtle changes in the connective tissue milieu in response to the other hand that is palpating. It is not too different from playing a tune on a piano I suppose. The treatment is very gentle and direct. The best, albeit imperfect, analogy that might help to explain the healing solution for your pet's condition is as follows:

Let us say that your Pet's body is the earth metaphorically speaking and all of the Plate Tectonic interactions which produce immeasurable structural stresses and strains at the boundaries between the earth's plates, are the locations that are causing your Pet's pain and incapacity. If one could determine what directional force(s) at what amplitude or depth, over what duration of time, that would eliminate all of the structural stress and strain at these plate boundaries, then in theory one could bring the entire earth into balance and eliminate the specter of violent temblors and volcanism.

Now I admit that is pretty silly and fanciful, and yet it is not far from the truth of what is going on when I'm applying that healing solution to your companion.

Additionally, a little mentioned effect on the body is the fact that it takes vastly greater amounts of the body's energy reserves to deal with and compensate for these structural derangements and the compensations. Have you ever had to walk on a painful ankle and tried to compensate by walking awkwardly just to move around a room in your house? How exhausting was that? This is why your pet will seem tired, lethargic, and low energy when they are attempting to live their life with structural derangements and pain.

Another way of looking at it is to envision a time when you awoke in the middle of the night with your night shirt or nightgown twisted uncomfortably tight around you, such that you couldn't easily move and the constriction was distressing enough to wake you from a sound sleep. So when you awoke, what did

you do to relieve your suffering? It wasn't rocket science, you merely straightened out your sleeping attire, thereby relieving the imbalance, and promptly returned to a comfortable rest. Your body is one vast and complex mass of connective tissue. The immeasurable interrelationships and interplays between muscles, fascia, tendons, ligaments, bones, joints, and cartilage, are what encompasses far more than the shape that looks back at you when you gaze into a full length mirror. As complex a system, I venture to say, has never been equalled in this universe and yet its purpose is as simple and uncomplicated as the act of reaching out and grasping the ears of your furry companion to bring them in close enough for a kiss on the cheek. So, when such acts or a thousand others become uncomfortable for you or your pet, it's time to find out why and input the healing solution that returns everything to the comfort of an unrestricted state of homeostatic balance.

Dr. Thompson I've heard of Infrared Laser or Cold Laser therapy, in fact my Veterinarian has used it on my pet. You use a different kind of Light Therapy. What's the difference?

A brief history of therapeutic lasers is in order to give you a better understanding of the technology. Years ago Infrared Lasers found their way into the fields of physical medicine and physical therapy. To understand this newer light therapy technology that I utilize, let me first describe the original light therapy modality. Infrared laser is also called Cold Laser because it produces no heat. Technically described as Low Level Laser Therapy (LLLT) to differentiate it from other more powerful laser applications used in the health care fields, this form of therapy had its origin in a serendipitous discovery by Hungarian professor and physician Dr. Endre Mester in 1969. At the time Dr. Mester was investigating the use of high power lasers to destroy cancerous tumors. In his early experiments he implanted tumor cells beneath the skin of laboratory rats and then "zapped" the tumor cells with his custom ruby (red light) laser. To his surprise the tumor cells were not destroyed by what was presumed to be a high power laser. However what plainly occurred was that the incisions he had previously made in the poor rats skin healed faster in the laser treated animals when compared to the incisions of the control animals that weren't so treated.

Subsequent experiments were performed to explain this phenomenon and these confirmed his suspicions that indeed treatment with red light accelerated healing of the surgical incisions. Baffled but fascinated by this development, he carried out other experiments in which he showed that skin defects, burns, and human cases of skin ulcers arising from diabetes, infected wounds and bed sores also healed faster. How could a device intended to destroy tumors cells promote healing? It turned out that his custom designed laser was in fact a low power laser.

Since Mester first uncovered the therapeutic benefit of this red laser light well over 2000 double-blind studies have documented that varied wavelengths of light have been shown to promote healing of skin, muscle, nerve, tendon, cartilage, bone, and periodontal (around the teeth) tissues. It was also discovered that the healing effect was accompanied by a powerful pain killing effect as well. Studies undertaken to explain these effects have shown that on a cellular level, light at appropriate doses and wavelengths is absorbed by light absorbing substances within the tiny energy “factories” of the body called mitochondria (energy generating organelles within each cell) and cell membranes. Once absorbed the energy is converted and stored as ATP (Adenosine Triphosphate). As gasoline is to your car’s engine, the chemical ATP is the form of energy your cells use to power the cellular machinery involved with living and in fact healing. Also found is that Red to Near Infrared (NIR) wavelengths penetrate more deeply than any other wavelengths of light.

Now, with that said why do my Infrared Lasers (two of them) that I used for more than ten years, sit collecting dust (actually I have sold one recently). I used to use these lasers on every animal patient. What has replaced them is a new Light Therapy system from a company called “LightMD.”

In late 2015 the FDA approved the application for a new ground breaking technology which represents the first significant advancement in the field of Photo or Light Therapy since Dr. Mester’s seminal research first brought the terms LLLT and Infrared Laser into the therapeutic lexicon. Practitioners with even a modicum of experience utilizing Infrared Laser therapy in their respective fields will admit, at least to colleagues, that the therapeutic benefits of Laser Therapy have always been inconsistent, patient to patient, and condition to condition. This has been my experience as well.

This technological advancement represents the culmination of years of research, addresses this as well as other limitations of Laser Therapy, and finally brings the full benefits of Light Therapy to fruition.

What makes this new Light Therapy system unique are the following. First, different tissue types and different conditions appear to need many wavelengths of light energy for healing. Lasers are monochromatic, meaning that they generate a single wave length, such as 810nm or 850nm. This new system produces wavelengths from roughly 600nm (Red light) through 950nm (Near Infrared light) and all the wavelengths in between. Second, instead of the usual 5 minute or so treatment times for lasers, this system’s treatment times are 20 to 30 minutes, providing a vastly greater amount of light energy to the body. Third, instead of the small area of treatment for lasers, this system can cover much larger areas with pads that contain hundreds of super luminous diodes. Vastly greater numbers of Watts of light energy are absorbed in these treatments when compared to Laser. Some companies that manufacture Cold Lasers have recently tried adding red and infrared LED’s to their Lasers to get around the single wavelength limitation. Unfortunately these older technology LED’s are pretty weak relative to their light output.

Fourth, this System is so advanced that it delivers the light pulsed (think of a blinking light) at what ever frequency the operator designates from 1hz to 20,000hz. (1 flash per second up to 20,000 flashes per second). Now why is this significant? It has been found that different conditions and tissues of the body respond even faster when illuminated at different resonant pulse frequencies. Different tissues appear to like the light in discrete packets of light energy delivered at certain rates. I suppose it’s analogous to the more pleasing sounds produced by singers modulating their voices or in string instruments such as a Cello as opposed to a constant unwavering tone.

As an aside, have you noticed older dogs and cats increasingly lay out in the direct sunlight, often to the point you are concerned about overheating? They do this because their bodies crave these beneficial wavelengths. The common assumption has previously been that older dogs, for example, lay in the sun because they crave the warmth. Paradoxically, these same older dogs often prefer cold hard tile or linoleum over their comfy beds to sleep on during the night! Over

the years I was always baffled by this phenomenon.

Our companions appear to put up with the heat to get the light. Unfortunately the Sun also provides less beneficial wavelengths such as Ultraviolet.

What can I do to help speed my pet's recovery?

An essential element to a pet's improvement is an owner's understanding of what factors can exist to slow down or even prevent full recovery. Analogously, if someone's child came to the Dentist with a mouth full of cavities, it's common sense that the parent would want to understand what could be done to prevent future cavities and thus avoid another costly trip to the Dentist. Understanding what could have caused your pet to develop his or her physical problems in the first place and intervening to eliminate these causative factors will go a long way towards assisting me in my goal of a stable, pain free, and lasting correction.

Should I continue the drugs my Vet prescribed?

First and foremost, if your Veterinarian has prescribed Steroids or NSAID's (Non Steroidal Anti-inflammatory Drugs) or Muscle Relaxers don't stop them unless you have gotten the OK from your Vet and always follow the taper-down schedule of the Steroids as outlined. Know however, that my goal ultimately is to resolve the underlying cause of your companion's malady to make these medications unnecessary. Even from a Holistic standpoint there is nothing wrong with bringing relief to acute conditions that cause your pet to suffer needlessly. However, there are undesirable consequences that you should be aware of above and beyond the well known side-effects of these drugs. The immediate consequences are that if these drugs render your pet incapable of feeling any pain or discomfort when a neuro-musculo-skeletal (physical injury pertaining to nerves, muscles, and skeletal components) injury or condition exists, there will be nothing to tell them to slow down or avoid additional or ongoing injurious activities that would likely create more damage to the compromised or injured structures. If you injure your back and "dope" yourself up on painkillers or NSAID's, despite your relief you know you are still injured and will take appropriate steps to allow for healing to take place. When your companion is "doped up" and feels no pain they think they're 100% and their activity level will reflect this,

to their ultimate detriment.

Can I continue to take my dog on walks? If they are capable of walking then I generally encourage walks to their tolerance. By this I mean coax them but don't force them. Studies have shown that activity in most cases is far better than inactivity as long as the activity doesn't exacerbate the injury or condition. Don't over do it however and err on the side of cutting back on the usual duration and distance. If you are used to going around the block for example you don't want to head out on your usual walk and find that half way around they quit and you are forced to carry them back home. A safer alternative is to walk up half a block from your house, turn around and walk back past your house half a block and turn around again. This way if they quit, you are at your farthest point only half a block from home. This also allows them to indicate to you that they are done if you attempt to go past your house and they insist on turning in.

Should I allow my pet to play with their toys? If their play involves playing fetch or shaking their toys violently or playing tug-a-war then the answer is a definite No! If they just like to lie and chew their toys then no problem. However, if they get into what I call a "games condition" with other pets in your home which involves protecting their toys by making sudden aggressive or menacing protective advances to approaching pets, then no. Aggressive posturing and sudden movements are hard on their musculoskeletal structures. Put the toys away until they are stable enough not to exacerbate their condition. Then introduce them back into their activities of daily living on a limited basis once they appear pain free. However common sense dictates that if they seem worse after any particular activity then avoid that activity.

Should I allow my pet to roam freely in and out of the house? If all they do when they go out is do their business and return inside then no problem. If however they can get involved with any of the following activities when outside then you must take them out, control their activities, and bring them back in supervised.

- Fence fighting with the neighbor's dogs is great fun, however it happens to be one of the activities that consistently re-injures back problems and will bring their recovery to a grinding halt. This will always be a no-no for your pet.

- Charging out the back door to chase away the squirrels or a brazen trespassing kitty is also great fun for your companion but is also fertile ground for continual re-injury. So no full on sprints for your pet until I give the OK. For older dogs it will just be one activity they will have to leave behind for good.
- Digging in the back yard for some dogs is irresistible and very hard on the spinal structures. It should be strictly avoided during initial recovery and thereafter if they seem to do worse after a session of digging. This includes going to the beach for digging sessions as well.

Should I let my pet jump on and off the bed or other furniture? Although not as bad for the larger breeds it will always be bad for smaller breeds and is often the reason that your companion ended up needing to see me in the first place. You will need to be creative to come up with ways to reduce the number of times per day that they do this. Get lightweight steps for couches and your bed. Use treats to coax them to use them and reward them with a treat every time they use them.

Can I take my dog on hikes in the hills off leash?

This is great exercise for most breeds but for the larger breeds and sporting breeds that go “hog wild” running up and down the hills, you are going to create increasing back problems over time. Some of the worst incapacitating back pain cases in young dogs that I have seen in my career are dogs that daily ran down hill. In some cases the owners lived in the hills and they played fetch charging down hill to retrieve the ball. Sometimes it was charging up and down the hill along the property line fence fighting with the neighbor dog. One particularly bad case that already showed signs of advanced spinal arthritis (called spondylosis) at a very young age involved a Black Lab whose training regimen involved daily sessions of charging down a small twenty foot incline into a lake to retrieve. So even when they have completely recovered, for small breeds avoid repeated jumping down from the furniture and in larger breeds avoid activities that involve charging down hill.

How can I avoid my pet re-injuring their Neck? A very common problem that I treat daily in pets is called “Lower Cervical (Neck) Instability.” In essence the vertebral joints in the lower neck become injured and the spine

unstable, sagging down and putting pressure on the back of the spinal cord. I have seen this condition cause everything from neck pain and spasms to loss of control and coordination in the rear legs to in its worse expression, frank paralysis, where a dog is unable get off the floor. The most common cause is a dog running head first into something. It may be a screen door or sliding glass that your dog runs into or perhaps a dog park incident where a collision takes place. Strenuous regular “tug-of-war” games can also cause this over time. If your companion suffers from this condition you must avoid any kind of “tug-of-war” games. Never hold their head especially if they are struggling and attempting to move their head and neck against your constraint. No bone or rawhide chewing if they tend to hold the bone with their paws and pull at it with their teeth. Do not allow them to bury things, because it often involves using their nose as a shovel to cover the item, putting undue stress on the lower neck. With smaller dogs, no sitting at your feet in the kitchen looking up with their neck acutely bent waiting for scraps to fall. No popping the choke chain to correct them. No struggling against a collar or gentle leader. Also never ever leave a heavy choke chain on your dog on a continuous basis. Some of the worst paralyzed pet cases I have treated I feel strongly were caused by lower neck instability induced by the heavy choke chain producing continuous downward weight and pressure on the vertebrae of the lower neck. In essence, avoid any activity which puts undue stress on the neck.

Should I consider a harness instead of a collar or gentle leader? I generally recommend against choke collars or gentle leaders especially if your companion suffers from neck and/or upper back problems. I also recommend that if your pet is weak and wobbly in the rear end that you strictly avoid these forms of restraint or control and go with a harness. For larger breeds it will be harder for you to control them since they can really put their weight into it when you take them for walks. However, choke chains and gentle leaders will put undue stress on the cervical spine (neck) and is often the cause of the neck problems I see on a daily basis.

Should I let my dog go up and down the stairs unrestricted? If your dog is not weak or wobbly and prone to falling and if they don’t charge down the stairs then it’s alright. However, if there is even a chance that your dog could fall because they are weak or wobbly then block the stairs with kiddie gates top and bottom. Dogs with Ataxia (wobbliness) and

Paresis (weakness) have significant spinal problems to begin with if they are exhibiting these signs of spinal cord compression and their susceptibility to falling increases the worse they are. Consequently, those most likely to fall are the ones least able to incur a fall down the stairs without serious, even ultimately fatal, neurological consequences. “What fatal neurological consequences?” You ask. If the fall injures the spine more and their neurological symptoms increase from the possibly acceptable weakness and wobbliness issues to, for many, a completely unacceptable inability to get up off the floor and the increasing fecal and urinary accidents where they lie, then you will likely be given the “quality of life lecture” at the Vets which frequently ends in euthanasia. So be warned!

Can my dog roam around the car un-tethered while I drive? It is recommended that whenever you transport your pet in your vehicle that they are confined in some way to prevent injury. Dogs with spinal problems are more unstable on their feet and more likely to lose their balance and carom off the interior of the vehicle with fast turns and sudden stops, which will serve only to worsen their condition. As with humans the possibility of serious or even fatal injuries increases exponentially in actual collision and/or roll over accidents if they are loose inside the vehicle.

Should I elevate the food and water bowls? Often a dog or cat will lie down and eat out of their bowls when they are suffering with neck or back problems. If your pet suffers from neck or upper back problems it is always recommended that you elevate their bowls.

What special problems do slippery hard wood, tile, or linoleum floors pose? Old dogs with spinal problems and smooth floors are a recipe for ongoing back and extremity problems. If you are an adult who goes roller blading, then you know what it feels like when your feet go out from under you and your body slams to the asphalt. I recently performed such a graceless maneuver and found myself looking up at the world with a whole new appreciation for just how hard asphalt has become. If your pet is regularly going down or losing his footing on your smooth floors I recommend carpet runners that will act as safe corridors through smooth floor areas of your home. I recently started recommending Yoga Mats. You can purchase a roll of yoga mat 1/4 inch by 103 Feet in a wide variety of colors from www.yogaaccessories.com for about \$150.00. You can cut them to size and they won't slip

like carpet runners. Unsteady pets will find them a godsend and use them consistently. Stairs that are uncarpeted are a disaster waiting to happen. Block them off especially for older unsteady pets.

We keep our thermostat set for 65 degrees or lower at night. For older dogs with spinal problems this can be an issue especially for short coated pets. As with humans, cold damp air can lead to morning stiffness and discomfort. It is well known that our “senior citizens” move to places like Florida, Palm Springs, and Phoenix to find relief for their old bones and joints. So you may be “snug as a bug in a rug” on those cold winter nights under your goose down comforter, however your dog's back exposed to the cool night air is fertile ground for aggravating and exacerbating chronic spinal problems. Also understand because of the tendency for warm air to rise, the coldest area of the house is always the floor where most dog beds are placed. Additionally, what I call the “dog cots,” beds that elevate your pet above the floor in a hammock like structure are good for summer but bad for winter. In summer they allow circulation of air under and around your pet to help keep them cool. It also keeps them colder in winter as the fur on the underside of your pet is compressed against the fabric thereby nullifying its insulating effect. Therefore in the colder months of the year either turn up the heat or fit your companion with a “doggy sweater” available online or at local high quality pet supply stores to insulate their exposed areas. If your dog burrows in under your goose down comforter with you then of course this wouldn't apply.

Is swimming OK? Should I take my companion for Hydrotherapy? For those who have never heard of Hydrotherapy, in the main it involves paying someone to either swim your pet around a pool for you or exercising them in a specially designed water tank that houses an underwater treadmill. As an adjunct to the structural corrections made by manipulation in many cases, non weight bearing to minimally weight bearing exercise of the type provided for by water exercise is beneficial especially for dogs who are weak or de-conditioned. For your pet it is a cost to benefit equation based upon your pet's particular injury or condition, your dog's fear of or affinity for water, the cost, and time involved. Not all conditions benefit enough to justify the \$75 to \$100 per session three times per week. Some pets are so resistant to anything to do with water that the wrestling match that will

ensue and the cortisol spike resulting from the overwhelming stress to your pet can often nullify any real benefit. Lastly, the only problem I have with any kind of Physical Therapy modality such as this is when it is applied to a misaligned and malfunctioning spine before it is straightened out. It is primarily a “putting the cart before the horse” issue. Any strengthening program for muscles and tissues supporting misaligned and malfunctioning structures serves only to lock in the misalignments and the resulting compensation patterns even more rigidly as the body attempts to protect these compromised areas from the very exercises (increased physical duress) you are applying. A case in point was one well known attorney I treated years ago who explained that the only way he kept his back pain at a livable level was by engaging in a rigorous daily exercise regimen he described as the Canadian Air force exercises or some such thing that included 500 sit-ups a day and so forth. On X-ray I have never seen a more twisted, deteriorated spine in my career. If anthropologists 300 years from now were to discover his buried remains they would assume that he had been some poor heavy laborer who lived in horrible pain and was worked to death instead of one of the wealthiest attorneys in Silicon Valley. His spine was so “petrified” and muscles so overcompensated that he was beyond help. Sadly, had he seen me before he embarked on this draconian conditioning program things might have turned out differently for him. So timing is everything. Consequently I will be happy to discuss the benefits and the timing should you have interest in water therapy.

Should I let my pet play with our other pets? You may find it interesting to know that a large percentage of my geriatric cases are referred to me within weeks of the owners getting a new puppy in the house. The owners decide that their old companion needs the kind of canine companionship afforded by a new puppy or perhaps they realize that their old dog may not be around in the near future and they don’t want to be left without a new companion when the older one passes on. Consequently, the new puppy behaving as new puppies will, begins to playfully beat up on the older pet, sometimes with the older pet’s encouragement. This frequently results in moderate to severe exacerbation of perhaps a quiescent to minimally symptomatic back or neck problem that was developing unbeknownst to the owner. Therefore, it is recommended that while they are recovering you ensure that your companion avoids roughhousing with other energetic

and playful canine cohorts. This also applies to dog parks where you risk the possibility of your pet being bowled over or torpedoed by a pack of enthusiastic canines out for a good time. Common sense would also extend this to situations where your dog could be attacked by another dog. The external bite wounds may be minor, but the attack may leave lasting internal damage to the spine and nervous system especially when your older animal puts everything they have into holding their own in such a battle.

When can I take my pet to the groomers? An ongoing mystery to me that over two decades of practice has failed to provide any logical answer to is the phenomenon that I see all too frequently. It goes something like this. I am treating a pet for neck or back problems, and/or weakness/wobbliness issues and they are improving nicely. The owner decides to take their companion in to be groomed because they are long overdue. The owner later picks their pet up from the groomer and notices they aren’t doing well and by the next day they are in a full blown relapse, sometimes worse than they were when we commenced treatment. This has happened so many times during my career that when someone asks me if their pet is ready for the groomers I often make the gestures with my hands as if to ward off Vampires. I have even gone so far as to question numerous groomers about this phenomenon and all of them know about this. The only thing that could explain this is that something is occurring that is too rigorous for the pet. Some possibilities that I have gleaned from conversations with pet owners and groomers are as follows. Larger pets are forced to turn around in the tub “head into the back wall” and away from the groomer, forcing an acute bend in the neck and upper back to clear the wall. Turning the pet towards the groomer so that the head and neck turn freely in open space above the front edge of the tub prevents this but puts the groomer at greater risk of being bitten. Often older dogs are being made to stand for hours tightly chained up by the neck, when because of pain they have trouble standing even a for minutes at home. Dogs that are handled roughly or abusively by callous employees who aren’t supervised by the shop owner could do it. Falling out of an elevated tub or off the grooming table and slamming into the unforgiving tile floor is also a possibility in some cases. Frankly your guess is as good as mine. So be warned and talk with me first before you take your pet to be groomed while they are recovering.

What can I do to minimize the risk of my dog's spinal problems being exacerbated by teeth cleaning or surgical procedures? It is a well known fact that humans and pets with spinal issues often experience mild to moderate to occasionally severe exacerbations just after surgical or other procedures where they are "put under" with anesthesia. I have seen this more times than I can easily count. The reason for this is that when you or your pet is anesthetized, the normal protective mechanisms afforded by your nervous system acting upon Tonic muscles (muscles that automatically hold joints in proper alignment without conscious input) that constrain excessive or faulty loading to joints aren't functioning. In layman's terms one becomes "limp as a noodle" and the muscles that react automatically to protect against sprains and dislocations are not on the job. Add the fact that even when you are asleep, if you are lying uncomfortably, meaning putting undue physical stress or faulty loading on some part of your body, you awaken and re-position yourself to find comfort and thereby prevent injury. When you are anesthetized you won't wake to re-position. Consequently to minimize the chance of flaring up a spinal problem it is important that your Surgeon is aware that your pet is being treated for this and that when lifting your unconscious companion that they lift while keeping the spine in perfect alignment nose to base of the tail. For larger breeds this requires two people to three people to prevent a draping effect where gravity causes your companion to droop like "al dente" spaghetti over a cook's fork with the resultant injuries or aggravation attendant to this. Feel free to copy this paragraph and give it to your surgeon prior to a procedure, so they are fully apprised of your concerns.

Were there signs that I missed that could have warned me of developing spinal problems?

How would you know if your pet were developing spinal problems? Over the years only a handful of pet owners could answer this question. Yet hardly a day goes by in my rounds to Veterinary clinics and hospitals that I don't witness late stage spinal problems in their most severe expression. Characteristically there are two classic presentations, and despite pet owner's insistence that their companion's desperate condition came on suddenly and without warning, there are always warning signs if one observes with educated eyes. The first is the dog in acute distress, often crying

out, usually "pain posturing," (head held down, back arched up, tail tucked under). The other is the pet who suddenly can't use his rear legs and is often unable to get up or collapses if assisted to the standing position.

Treating thousands of these late stage cases, questioning pet owners during consultation, I have catalogued the most common warning signs that portend this mostly needless suffering.

● **No Longer Shaking or Stretching.** Excluding the times that your pet vigorously shakes his body during his bath to thoroughly drench you and when he shakes his head with ear issues, a dog will routinely shake his body vigorously starting with his head and ending with the tail, the full length of his body multiple times per day. They do this as part of their doggy fur hygiene. Notice if in fact your dog shakes vigorously and fully from head to tail. Dogs with developing neck problems may not shake at all. Dogs with developing back problems will generally shake their head and neck, but as the shake progresses tail ward it will stop at the shoulders or mid back and so forth. Dogs will also stretch, especially when they just arise from lying down. You will see them perform "upward dog" (head up, butt down, rear legs extended backwards) and "downward dog" (butt up, head down, front legs extended forward). Dogs developing spinal problems generally won't perform one or both of these stretches.

- **Distinct hot areas along the spine.**
- **Skin along back twitching/crawling.**
- **Unwilling or unable to jump up.**
- **Legs weak/wobbly/uncoordinated.**
- **Toe nails dragging when walking.**
- **Avoids energetic pets or children.**
- **No longer willing to play fetch.**
- **Crying out when bumped or moved.**
- **Hates being picked up or carried.**
- **Avoids being "pet" or brushed.**
- **Backbone rounding or arching up.**
- **Unusual laziness or stubbornness.**
- **Slowing down or balking on walks.**
- **No longer greets you at the door.**
- **Difficulty standing from a sit.**
- **Won't sit or stand for very long.**
- **Difficulty on smooth or slick floors.**
- **Falling when rear end gives out.**
- **Rear legs together, "bunny hopping."**
- **Tail down or no longer wagging tail.**

- **Sitting awkwardly, rear legs askew.**
- **Legs shaking or quivering.**
- **Lying on the floor to eat.**

It is interesting to note that when questioned regarding these signs, most pet owners respond, “I just thought it was due to age.” While it is true that symptoms of spinal problems in humans and animals are more likely to surface as one ages. It is not true that age causes spinal problems. It is simply time and the sum of accumulated micro and macro injuries (wear and tear) that induce the spinal problems that I endeavor to locate and resolve in the animal patient.

Premise for Holistic Health.

If this is your first venture into the world of Complimentary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) which includes things such as Acupuncture, Chiropractic, Osteopathy, Naturopathy, Homeopathy, nutraceuticals, nutrition, herbs and so forth, then you will soon come to realize, as those who are well versed know all too well, that it takes far less effort, less personal responsibility, less learning and understanding to embrace the Western Model of health in caring for the general needs of your companion. All you have to know is when and how much basic dog chow you will need to put down each day along side a bowl of water and when some symptom arises you take your companion in for a pill to deal with the symptoms. It takes far greater time, effort, and personal responsibility to seek out information that will add to your ever growing understanding of what is essential for optimal health and vitality for your companion, especially when slick TV, Radio, and Print ads barrage you daily with questionable, purely profit motivated information that will attempt to convince you otherwise. I challenge you to live on two bowls of highly processed, oven baked chips (kibble) each day solely for 10 to 15 years and remain healthy. This would be ludicrous for you. Common sense would tell you this. Do you really believe that a Pet’s physiology evolved so differently than ours that this is optimal nutrition for them?

Taking just one facet of the larger holistic health care puzzle for those of you new to holistic concepts, let’s apply a little “Tomato Logic” to explore a basic premise of holistic health. Can you recall buying a supermarket tomato that looked like a tomato and felt like a tomato, but when you got it home it turned out to be rubbery, bland, and for the most part tasteless? Now can you recall a time when you tasted a home grown

tomato that was juicy, delicious, and just bursting with tomato flavor? One was a counterfeit tomato and the other the genuine article. The differences go deeper than the fact that the supermarket tomato was picked early and ripened with ethylene gas. It is in large measure how they were grown. One was grown on nutrient depleted soil that has supported crops year after year for decades, exhausting the soil of key micro-nutrients and minerals, and the only thing agri-business ever put back into the soil were synthetic fertilizers. Like an automotive assembly line building cars without all the parts for a complete vehicle, what comes off of the line looks like a car. However, no steering wheel here, or no carburetor there, or no transmission on the other renders each incapable of performing the functions for which it was designed and built. Or think of the less than venerable Yugo. All the parts were there, but of such inferior quality as to limit its function and lifespan. So you end up with the fruit of the tomato plant’s labor that hasn’t a fraction of the trace minerals, vitamins, enzymes, and nutrients that its home grown cousin abounds in. Those poor unhealthy depleted tomato plants are weak and susceptible to infestation and disease and so they are provided lots of pesticides and other chemicals to beat back the insect and microbial invaders. As depleted as they were though, these tomato plants still did their best with what was available to produce tomatoes for your supermarket. Your body and that of your companion works the same way. You don’t produce tomatoes but you do produce billions of new cells throughout your body including your organs and immune system on continual basis. Are those billions of new cells you are growing more like the home grown tomatoes or are they similar to that depleted unhealthy supermarket tomato? Your health and the health of your pet will ultimately be determined by the answer to this question. I realize that these basic concepts are second nature to some and completely foreign to others. At the risk of boring the former or possibly offending the later I felt it important enough to risk either to make a difference for some.

This concludes the Frequently Asked Questions. I hope this has given you a basic understanding of what your companion’s treatment is all about, what you can do to assist in your pet’s recovery, and information on holistic health concepts. Should you have additional questions you can ask me during our next visit or just pick up the phone and I will make myself available. drkft