

If Your Pet Finds Her Way Into This Trouble, Here Are 10 Ways to 'Doctor' Her

Virtually every organ in your pet's body can be affected by it, and you'll probably want additional support. But to keep her as comfortable as possible, promote healing, and minimize adverse effects, here are 10 TLC-inspired ways to 'doctor' her. She'll thank you later.

Reviewed by [Dr. Becker](#)

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Caring for a recumbent or immobilized pet requires around-the-clock attention; try to split responsibilities among family members
- Your pet will need to be rotated at least every two to four hours to prevent pressure sores
- You'll need to make sure your pet is eating and drinking enough as well as urinating and defecating normally
- There are many holistic options for pain relief in pets, including chiropractic treatments, acupuncture, massage and even CBD therapy
- If your pet is immobilized, whether it be for just a short period ("crate rest") or due to a chronic condition, he will still crave your attention and care

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If your pet is recumbent, or unable to stand up or move around normally, special care will be needed. This may be the case after surgery, during which a pet needs to be kept immobile during the recovery period, or due to trauma (being hit by a car, for instance), brain diseases, severe illness or paralysis.

Virtually every organ in your pet's body will be affected by immobility and you should seek professional veterinary support. However, when your recumbent pet is in your care, here are 10 factors to help keep him comfortable, promote healing and minimize adverse effects.¹

10 Tips for Caring for a Recumbent Pet

1. **Pressure sores** — Once a pressure sore, sometimes known as bed sore, develops, it's very difficult to treat, making prevention critical. Be sure your pet is lying on thickly padded, dry bedding. Consider eggshell foam over an orthopedic (memory foam) bed, topped with thick blankets.

You'll need to rotate him at least every two to four hours. It may help to write down which side your pet was laying on last so you don't forget during transitions.

2. **Elimination** — If your pet is unable to urinate spontaneously, you will need to manually express his bladder four to six times daily (your veterinarian can show you how to safely do this). As long as your pet is eating well,

he should defecate on his own.

It's extremely important to change soiled bedding immediately and keep your pet's skin and fur clean and dry to prevent sores.

3. **Eating and drinking** — Many recumbent pets lose interest in eating and drinking. If your pet is able to sit with his head up (sternal recumbency), you can try to entice him to eat by hand feeding him and offering tasty treats like bone broth.

If your pet is laying down (lateral recumbency), do not attempt to give your dog food, as it could lead to choking. In this case, you'll need to consult with your veterinarian to see if a feeding tube or parenteral nutrition is needed.

If your pet is not drinking water regularly, you'll need to see your veterinarian for fluids to prevent dehydration.

4. **Temperature** — Be sure to keep your pet comfortable temperature-wise, as immobile pets may have trouble maintaining body temperature. Learn from your dog's vet how to take his temperature (it needs to be done rectally) and invest in a digital thermometer that you designate for doggie use only.

If your pet's body temperature is low, towel-wrapped heating pads (only on the lowest setting), blankets and heating blankets can be used, but be sure to place a towel in between any heating device and your pet's skin for protection, and monitor your pet's body temperature every 15 minutes to make sure he doesn't overheat.

5. **Mobility** — If possible, you'll want to try to get your pet up and about to exercise his muscles and boost circulation.

There are mobility devices like slings, harnesses, and wheels that can be tremendously helpful for both dogs and their humans, although professional rehabilitation therapy should also be considered.

6. **Muscles and joints** — Your pet's muscles can atrophy when not used regularly while his joints may become stiff. You can use hot or cold packs applied for up to 10 minutes every six to eight hours for symptomatic relief.

To make your own hot pack, soak a towel in hot water or wet it and warm it in the microwave. Put the towel in a plastic bag, cover the site on your dog's body with another towel, and place the plastic bag over it, ensuring the pack isn't hot enough to burn your pet's skin.

In addition, therapeutic massage is incredibly important. Massage helps to promote normal fluid flow throughout the body and reduce lactic acid build up in muscles. This speeds up the recovery process, reduces pain, and helps prevent digestive issues like constipation.

7. **Circulation** — Walking is one of the best ways to promote good circulation in your pet, so you'll want to encourage walking if your pet can safely do so. If not, passive range-of-motion (PROM) exercises can be used to increase blood flow to joints and other areas.

Massage is also useful to improve circulation and encourage lymphatic drainage. Underwater treadmill therapy offered at rehab facilities can be very beneficial for improving circulation and range of motion in debilitated animals.

8. **Respiration** — Immobile pets are at risk of a collapsed lung on the side facing down. Rotating your pet every several hours can help to prevent this. If possible, you should also try to keep your pet in a slight sitting up position to support respiration.

Coupage, sometimes called percussion therapy, can be used to help loosen and remove excess secretions from your dog's lungs.

Your pet's veterinarian or rehabilitation specialist can perform this technique on your dog (it involves manually patting your pet's chest wall in a rhythmic pattern) or teach you how to do it safely and effectively.

9. **Pain management** — There are many holistic options for pain relief in pets, including chiropractic treatments, acupuncture, massage and even **CBD therapy**. You can also diffuse flower essences into the air and use them topically and orally to relieve stress.
10. **Cuddle time and environmental enrichment** — If your pet is immobilized, whether it be for just a short period ("crate rest") or due to a chronic condition, he will still crave your attention and care. Take time each day to spend time with your pet, cuddling him, petting him and talking to him to let him know you care. He can also become easily bored, so consider implementing some fun "brain games" to help pass the time.

Caring for an immobile pet presents many challenges above and beyond typical pet ownership, and you shouldn't attempt to do it all on your own. Be sure to enlist the help of a **holistic veterinary professional** to help guide you, and ideally, share the responsibilities among family members so your pet gets the constant care he deserves.

Sources and References

¹ [Veterinary Practice News December 28, 2015](#)
