

# Patellar Luxation



## What is patellar luxation?

The patella is the bone we know as the knee cap. It covers and helps protect the knee joint. Your dog's thigh bone (femur) has a groove in which the patella slides up and down as the knee joint is bent back and forth. This groove is designed to limit the movement of the patella and keep it in place. If your dog is born with a shallow groove or the groove becomes shallower with age and wear, it may allow the patella to luxate, or "pop" out of place. When this happens it may cause your dog to limp for a period of time, until the patella "pops" back into place. Dogs with patellar luxation may be more prone to having arthritis which can cause a permanently swollen knee and poor mobility. A thorough orthopedic evaluation by your Banfield doctor will help determine if your dog has a luxating patella and what treatment should be started.

## Is my pet at risk?

Any dog can have a luxating patella. It can be present at birth or from trauma to the knee joint or ligaments in the knee. This disease can be inherited, and therefore serious consideration should be taken before breeding a dog with luxating patellas. According to data gathered by the Orthopedic Foundation for Animals (OFA), toy, miniature and large breed dogs all seem to be affected by this disease.

## What are the symptoms of patellar luxation?

Symptoms may vary dramatically depending on whether or not the patella moves back into place. In milder forms, on-again off-again lameness is evident only when the patella is out of position. The affected leg is held up close to the body, but may be touched to the ground every third or fourth step at fast gaits. Your dog will appear to be skipping when this occurs. You may even be able to feel a popping sensation if you move your pet's hind leg. In more severe forms, the patella does not move back into place, and lameness in the affected leg may be constant and the pain can be quite severe. In older patients, signs may develop rapidly and may be associated with injury or strenuous activity. It is possible to have a luxating patella on both legs. This is most commonly seen in dogs that inherited the disease.



---

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.

## How will the doctor diagnose and treat my pet?

Your Banfield doctor will complete an orthopedic exam on your pet and grade the level of patellar luxation.

- Grade 1: The patella can be moved out of place, but immediately goes back on its own.
- Grade 2: The patella luxates when the knee joint is flexed, and returns when the knee is extended. It will occasionally take a little bit of time before the patella returns to its normal position.
- Grade 3: The patella is permanently luxated, but your doctor is able to move it back to its normal position.
- Grade 4: The patella is permanently luxated, and cannot be put back into place.

Depending on the grade, different treatment options may be available. Some patients may just need medication to help reduce inflammation and prevent arthritis. Other patients with a higher grade will need to have corrective surgery. Patients that undergo surgery for this disease often respond very well with physical therapy and can recover as early as 30 days. Your doctor will discuss in detail what treatment option is best for your pet.

As with humans, your pet's overall health will benefit from maintaining a normal weight and taking part in routine moderate, non-stressful exercise. A normal weight will decrease the risk for arthritis while exercise will help maintain flexibility and improve the muscular strength of the legs. Please ask your doctor if your pet should start a weight loss program and/or what type of exercise is recommended for your pet's particular condition.



---

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.