

# Cranial Cruciate Ligament Injuries



## What is a cranial cruciate ligament?

The dog's stifle (which is equivalent to the human knee) is stabilized by many ligaments. The two biggest ligaments are the cruciate ligaments, which are responsible for stabilizing the front-to-back motion of the knee. The cranial cruciate ligament (CCL) is the most common ligament to be injured, and is similar to when humans injure their anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). Injuries to the CCL happen when too much stress is placed on the joint in any given direction, resulting in complete or partial tears of the ligament. Most commonly, these injuries occur during active play, jumping or by trauma.

## Is my pet at risk?

Any dog can injure the CCL, although larger breed dogs or dogs that are very active tend to account for the majority of pets seen with a CCL injury. Pets that are overweight can be at a higher risk for ligament injuries due to the increased weight that puts greater stress on their joints.

## What are the symptoms of a CCL injury?

Injuries to ligaments are very painful. You may hear your pet cry out in pain while playing or jumping. Most commonly you will see a lameness in one of the hind limbs that can even result in your pet not using the affected limb. The leg isn't usually painful to touch, but does cause your pet pain when trying to walk.

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

Your Banfield veterinarian will complete a thorough physical examination as well as perform a full orthopedic or lameness examination. Diagnosis is usually made by manipulation of the knee, although many dogs will need to be sedated for this, depending on their individual pain level. During the manipulation, your veterinarian is looking for an abnormal movement from the front of the tibia to the end of the femur. Other tests that may be needed include X-rays.

Treatment for a CCL injury is specific to each pet. Depending on the size and activity of your pet, this most commonly includes surgery to repair the ruptured ligament. There are several different techniques used to stabilize the knee following a complete CCL tear and the method that is appropriate will be determined by your veterinarian's examination of your pet. Following surgery, or in those cases where surgery may not be appropriate, a thorough physical therapy plan is important for successful recovery. Regardless of the pet, weight control plays a large factor in the success of the management of these cases.

Once the knee has been damaged, it will never be totally normal. When the ligament is damaged, it often damages the cartilage and other structures in the knee. This damage, as well as the ligament damage, can lead to arthritis in the affected joint. However, rapid intervention by your veterinarian can significantly slow down the progression of arthritis and allow for an almost normal function of the leg. Please consult your Banfield veterinary team for more information or questions regarding your pet.