

RANGE OF MOTION

What is it? Range of motion means moving a joint through its entire range, from all the way flexed to all the way extended. Measuring range of motion helps us to tell how much joint mobility is present. We usually measure each joint with the first rehab evaluation, and then selected joints thereafter as treatment progresses. We also may recommend joint range of motion exercises, moving the dog's joint(s) through that range repeatedly, to maintain flexibility. The inside of the joint receives a great deal of its nourishment through motion of the joint fluid. Flexing and extending a joint helps maintain the nutrition and health of the joint tissues. It also relieves pain.

When is it used? Range of motion should be done after any surgery involving a joint. Like stretching, it is also a good thing to do before exercising, to reduce pain and risk of injury. In human rehabilitation, return to full range of motion is one of the milestones you have to reach before being let out of the hospital or rehab facility.

Does it hurt? We try to never cause pets pain during rehab. Pain causes stiffness when we want relaxation. It endangers us, and you, because the pet will try to protect itself from the pain. It also is counterproductive to healing. Range of motion is only done to the point of discomfort, not beyond it.

How do I do it? Lay your pet on its side on a comfortable bed or blanket with the leg you are treating up. Support the limb you are exercising below and above the affected joint, at a natural angle. Gently flex the limb as far as possible and hold it there a few seconds. Then slowly extend the leg all the way out. Repeat this slow flexion and extension 10-15 times.