PATELLAR LUXATION

The patella is the small bone that sits in a groove (the trochlear groove) at the bottom of the femur. As the knee moves, the patella moves through the trochlear groove. A patella luxates when it falls out of the trochlear groove to the inside (medial) or outside (lateral). Patella luxations are graded 1-4 depending on how often the patella luxates, from occasional (grade 1) to constantly (grade 4). The amount the patella luxates is also evaluated for partial to complete or severe displacement of the patella.

Technique:

In small dogs and cats, Grade 1 subluxating patellas that do not cause clinical signs should be monitored and usually do not warrant surgical correction. Surgery is considered in grades 2, 3, and 4 patella luxations, and on all large dogs. Correction of luxating patellas includes one or all of the following procedures:

1). Deepening of the trochlear groove
2). Loosening of the tissues on the inside of the knee
3). Tightening of the tissues on the lateral surface of the knee
4). Realignment of the tibial crest, which is the attachment of the patellar tendon. This portion of the surgical procedure involves moving a small portion of the tibia and stabilizing it with intramedullary pins.

Recovery:

After surgery, a soft, padded bandage will be applied. Three to five days after surgery, the bandage will be removed by a technician. After surgery, the patient’s activity must be restricted to leashed walks and no rough play or running for a period of eight weeks. Restricting activity level plays a major role in the success of the surgery.

Recheck:

An appointment with a technician to remove the bandage will be required 3-5 days after surgery. A recheck examination with the surgeon will be required 12-14 and 30 days after surgery.
Complications:

The following complications have been documented: infection, tibial fracture, delayed healing of the osteotomy, loosening of the pins, reluxation of the patella, luxation of the patella to the opposite side. A stifle affected with luxating patella, before or after repair, is likely more susceptible to ACL disease. Some of these complications require additional surgery. These complications are rare at Wilson Veterinary Hospital.

Prognosis:

Overall, the prognosis for patients undergoing surgical correction of a patellar luxation is excellent for return to normal limb function. The prognosis is less favorable in large dogs, especially when the patellar luxation is combined with other conditions, such as cruciate ligament disease. Degenerative joint disease (DJD) is expected and will progress despite treatment, but it will be less severe than without surgical repair. Weight management and appropriate exercises will help minimize the progression of DJD. Prognosis for patients with a grade 4 patellar luxation is less predictable as some require extensive surgical correction.