



Southern Counties

VETERINARY  
SPECIALISTS

# What is a perineal hernia?

Information Sheet

**Southern Counties Veterinary Specialists  
Specialist Referral Service**

## What is a perineal hernia?

A perineal hernia is a breakdown or a weakness of the perineal muscles (by the side of the rectum and back pelvic area), allowing the rectal wall to pooch out and some fat and potentially pelvic and some abdominal organs to come through. This hernia is typically identified as a soft tissue mass/swelling on the side of the anus/rectum, many times associated with difficulty passing stool and, more rarely, urinating.

## How is this condition diagnosed?

Perineal hernias mostly affect older, male, intact dogs and is a gradually progressive condition, as the pelvic diaphragm muscles weaken, affecting both sides, although one side may be worse than the other. Diagnosis is confirmed with a rectal exam done by a veterinary professional, so it can be distinguished from other conditions affecting this area, such as rectal cancer or anal gland diseases.

## How is a perineal hernia treated?

Mild cases can be treated with the use of stool softeners to decrease straining against this

weakness but most cases are progressive and will need corrective surgery sooner or later. This can be done on one or both sides, depending on the severity of the condition and preference of the surgeon, by reinforcing the weakened area using local muscle flaps, sutures or artificial meshes. Occasionally, the abdomen may also need to be entered to secure abdominal organs in a way that decreases pressure on the perineal muscle repair, reducing the chance of re-herniation.

## What can I expect after the surgery?

Your pet should be able to go home the day after the surgery, on mild pain medication and, perhaps, some antibiotics and stool softeners to avoid constipation and straining against the repair. Moderate lead walks and, at home, no stairs or jumping on/off the couch is advisable for 4 weeks, as the post-op formation of scar tissue and the hardening of the mesh, if used, will take place during that time.

Gradual reintroduction of normal exercise can happen after that and, in most cases, normal life can be expected, with full resolution of clinical signs. However, re-formation of the hernia can happen in a small proportion of cases, perhaps needing further surgery.





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