

Crate rest: advice for owners of IVDD dachshunds

Contents

Introduction	2
Recovery crate shopping list.....	3
Introducing your dog to the crate.....	4-8
Why does my dog need a crate?	9
The crate needs to be large enough for recovery.....	9
Helping your crate-confined dog stay happy and content.....	11
How to set up your dog's recovery crate.....	13-16
What type of crate or pen is best for my dog?	13
Where should I put the crate?	14
What should I put in the crate?	14-16
Flooring.....	14
Bedding.....	15
Food and water bowls.....	16
Toys.....	16
How can I keep my dog safe outside the crate?	18
Choosing a harness and lead.....	19
Lifting and carrying your recovering dachshund.....	20
Walking with your recovering dachshund.....	21
Signs of tiring.....	22
Sling-walking.....	23
Toileting.....	24
Daily routine for your recovering dachshund.....	26
Quiet games for recovering dogs.....	27
Physiotherapy.....	28
Physiotherapy exercises.....	28
Massage and "passive range of movement"	30
Choosing a physiotherapist.....	32
Getting the best from your physiotherapist.....	32
Staying positive during your dog's recovery.....	34

Introduction

If your dachshund has been diagnosed with disc disease (IVDD) then your vet may have advised crate rest. This guide explains how to choose and set up your dog's recovery crate or pen, and offers advice on keeping your dog safe and comfortable during recovery.

Depending on your dog's size and personality, and on your vet's advice, you may end up using either a crate or an indoor dog pen (see p13). In this guide, the terms "crate" and "crate rest" are used for dogs recovering in either crates or pens.

Crate rest can be useful whether or not your dog needs an operation for their disc disease. This guide to crate rest is aimed at owners of dachshunds in any of the following situations:

- Following spinal surgery.
- Before spinal surgery.
- Treatment of disc disease without an operation ("conservative management").

If possible, it is best to get the recovery crate ready ahead of time so that your dog has the chance to get used to it gradually. If you are just getting started, then we recommend that you first look at "Recovery crate shopping list" to see what you need to get hold of, and also check out "How to introduce your dog to the crate". The rest of this guide is handy to keep for reference. For example, "How to set up your dog's recovery crate" explains how to make your dog's crate as comfortable as possible.

Recovery crate shopping list

Your dog will be inside the crate for nearly 24 hours per day, possibly for several weeks at a time. If your dog is comfortable, then recovery will be easier, so do take the time to set the crate up as a pleasant home for your dog.

It is best to get the crate ready as early as possible, i.e. as soon as your dachshund has been diagnosed with a disc problem. Your dog will accept the crate more easily if it is introduced gradually over a few days.

You may already have some of the items listed below. Old familiar blankets and towels are better than new ones, as they smell of home. You will probably need to buy a crate of the right size though, as your dog's old puppy crate will almost certainly be too small.

- A purpose-built dog crate or indoor pen (see "How to set up your dog's recovery crate" for advice on whether to get or crate or pen, and for guidance on which size to choose).
- Non-slip matting to cover the floor inside and immediately outside the crate (see "flooring", below). You may also need extra non-slip matting to extend from the crate to the garden door if you have slick floors. Matting is sold by the metre by some flooring companies, or use "dust trapper" mats or improvise with non-slip bath mats, door mats, old yoga matting, etc.
- Soft bedding (large flat pad-style dog bed, or a blanket or folded small old quilt).
- Vetbed® or cheap fluffy bath mat, with one or more spares for washing.
- Food bowl.
- Water bowl to clip to the inside of the crate.
- Toys, e.g. Kongs®, other food-dispensing toys or chew toys.
- A well-fitting walking harness (see p19). Mekuti® and Perfect Fit® are two suggested brands. Look for an adjustable harness with a "Y" shaped front (not a "T" shaped front).
- A fixed-length dog lead to clip to the harness (see p19).
- Floor-cleaning bits in case of indoor toilet accidents (disposable gloves, floor cleaner designed for pets).

Optional: old blankets and/or a cot bumper to stop draughts

Optional: DAP (Adaptil®) plug-in diffuser, and possibly also a bottle of DAP spray (see p11-12 for more information). These are available from most vet clinics.

Optional: A dog pushchair (stroller)

If your dog is completely collapsed (cannot get up from a lying position), then you may also need:

- High density foam mattress cut to fit the base of the crate. This can be bought from online foam suppliers. Or a large old quilt or pile of blankets.
- Several pieces of Vetbed® or old towels.
- Extra old towels to roll up as props and padding, if needed.
- Disposable incontinence pads.
- A hindquarter sling to help support your dog's rear end during toilet breaks, see p23 (An old woollen scarf can be used to start with if needed).

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Introducing your dog to the crate

Top tips:

- ✓ Make the crate comfortable before showing it to your dog.
- ✓ Introduce the crate as a step-by-step process, over several days if possible.
- ✓ Handle your dog gently throughout the crate introduction process, and keep your voice kind and positive.
- ✓ Keep other dogs out of the room during crate introduction sessions.
- ✓ Food can be used to tempt your dog into the crate. But take care not to exceed your dog's daily food ration.

Dogs are quick learners, and they will soon learn to hate their crate if their first experience of it is unpleasant. It is therefore best to introduce your dog to the crate gradually and carefully. Manhandling your dog into the crate and then slamming the door closed will make your dog anxious and is likely to lead to future behavioural problems.

Make the crate comfortable before you even show it to your dog. For successful crate introduction, the inside of the crate needs to be made to appear more attractive to your dog than the rest of the room. Before your dog first enters the crate, furnish it with comfortable bedding, a draught-free place to rest, food, water and your dog's favourite toys. Check that the floor of the crate offers good footing and does not wobble, otherwise your dog will lose confidence as soon as they step inside. If your crate contains a removable base tray that wobbles, then it is best to remove this. Line the base with non-slip matting (p3) before placing bedding on top of this.

A positive approach is essential during crate introduction. Dogs are quick to pick up on our emotions, so do your best to keep your voice positive and kind throughout the crate introduction process. Shouting at your dog, or rough handling, will make them anxious about the crate.

Your dog may choose to come up to you for attention when you first show them the crate. If so, then act in quite a low-key, boring way. You can give them a few kind, reassuring words, but don't reward your dog for coming to you at this point by lifting and carrying them, or with food from your hand or a game. At this moment, you don't want to give your dog the idea that life is more fun outside, than inside, the crate. If you have other dogs, then put them out of the room during crate introduction so that they don't act as an extra distraction.

Food is usually the best way to tempt your dog into the crate. It's a good idea to start crate introduction at a time of day when your dog is likely to be hungry. If your dog will do anything for food, then bits of their usually dog kibble may be enough to tempt them in. For fussy eaters, you may need to use tasty dog treats. When using food and treats during crate introduction, be careful not to overfeed your dog. Check how much your dog should be eating each day, measure this out each morning and take not to exceed this, even if some of the food is being scattered onto the floor of the crate or is fed from a Kong®. If using dog treats, then break these into tiny pieces, and reduce the rest of your dog's ration to compensate.

Crate introduction needs to be a step-by-step process. This will allow your dog to accept their new situation gradually. If your dog is allowed to walk about a little, and if your vet is happy for your dog to walk into and out of the crate on a lead, then follow Method 1 as outlined below.

Unfortunately, many crates have an awkward “lip” at the entrance, and your dog may not be safe to walk back and forth over this. If your dog is not safe or mobile enough to walk in and out of the crate, then follow Method 2.

Step-by-step guide to crate introduction: Method 1

Use this method if it is easy for your dog to step in and out of the crate, and if your vet is happy for your dog to walk around a bit.

1. Assemble the crate. Check that the crate floor provides even footing (remove the base of the crate if this is going to wobble when stepped on). Cover the floor of the crate with non-slip matting, and then with plenty of bedding. Put your dog’s favourite toys and a bowl of his or her food inside the crate. (For details of crate set-up, see p13-16)
2. Optional: Plug in a DAP (Adaptil®) diffuser as close as possible to the crate. Spray the bedding with DAP spray. (see p11-12 for more information)
3. If the room is not carpeted, then place non-slip matting around the entrance to the crate.
4. Prop the crate door wide open.
5. Roll up two towels into long sausage shapes (or use long draught-excluder cushions). Place these on the floor, one on either side of the crate entrance. These should make two sides of an imaginary path leading to the crate entrance, so as to help lead your dog’s eyes towards the crate.
6. Pick a time when you expect your dog to be hungry. Put your dog on a harness and lead to give you some control. Walk your dog towards the crate and allow them to sniff at it.
7. Put bits of dog kibble just inside the crate entrance and let your dog sniff at and eat these. If your dog is not interested, then try dog treats. Break the treats into tiny bits, as you’ll be using quite a few of them during the crate introduction process. If your dog is still not interested in the food, then take a break and try again before their next meal. If your dog is still not interested at the next attempt, then check that the crate is set up comfortably, and try again the next day.
8. Gently roll bits of food further inside the crate. The movement of food may encourage your dog to follow. If your dog chooses to explore the inside of the crate, then allow them to do so on the end of a loose lead. Do *not* shut the crate door at this stage.
9. If your dog either finds the bowl of food and eats it, or chooses to lie down in the crate, then let them do so. Do *not* shut the crate door at this stage.
10. Allow your dog to step out of the crate when they are ready to do so.
11. Later in the day, or during the next day, repeat steps 4 to 8. Keep the crate door propped wide open throughout.
12. Fill a Kong® and put this inside the crate. Let your dog chew on this inside the crate. You may need to repeat steps 6 and 7 to encourage your dog to enter the crate before they find the Kong®.
13. Once your dog is confident both to eat and to rest a little within the crate, close the crate door gently with your dog inside. It’s best to do this while your dog is eating from a bowl of food, or chewing on a filled Kong®. Open the door again before the dog has finished the food.

14. Over several days, gradually increase the length of time that your dog spends inside the closed crate.

Step-by-step guide to crate introduction: Method 2

Use this method if it is difficult for your dog to step in and out of the crate.

1. Assemble the crate. Check that the crate floor provides even footing (remove the base of the crate if this is going to wobble when stepped on). Cover the floor of the crate with non-slip matting, and then with plenty of bedding. Put your dog's favourite toys inside the crate. (For details of crate set-up, see p13-16)
2. Optional: Plug in a DAP (Adaptil®) diffuser as close as possible to the crate. Spray the bedding with DAP spray. (see p11-12 for more information)
3. Prop the crate door wide open.
4. Pick a time when you expect your dog to be hungry, and get some food ready for your dog to enjoy inside the crate. Keep the total amount of food quite small, but present the food in several different ways at once. The trick is to offer food that your dog can really enjoy, without causing them an upset stomach. Put at least two of the following inside the crate:
 - a. A small bowl of your dog's food (not as much as a full meal).
 - b. A few bits of your dog's kibble scattered onto the floor of the crate. If your dog cannot walk at all, then put the kibble into a little heap on the floor.
 - c. A few tiny dog treats on the floor of the crate.
 - d. A filled Kong®. (see p16)
5. Put your dog on a harness to give you some control. The top of the harness acts as a handy "grab handle" just in case your dog is wriggly or tries to rush off.
6. Lift your dog into the crate. Sit, crouch or stand just outside the crate entrance with the crate door propped open. Let your dog explore the inside of the crate while you watch. If you are lucky, your dog will eat without any prompting. You may need to hand-feed the first bits of treat to your dog, and you may need to pick the Kong® up and show it to your dog until they get the idea.

Tip: If your dog tries to rush straight out of the crate into your arms, then get hold of their harness to steady them. Use your free hand to point into the crate, and say "Go find the food" or "Go and explore". If your dog is still not happy to enter the crate, then take a break and try again several hours later. Don't offer any food in the meantime. For persistent crate problems, ask your vet for advice and consider referral to a canine behavioural specialist.
7. Once your dog has chosen to stop eating, lift them out of the crate. Do not make too much of a fuss of your dog at this point.
8. Take a break! Keep your dog out of the crate for a while. This is probably also an ideal time for your dog's toilet-break.
9. Repeat steps 3-8 at your dog's next meal time.
10. Repeat steps 3-8 again. Once your dog is confident to eat inside the crate, try closing the crate door while they are eating. Stay nearby in the same room. Open the door again before your dog has finished eating.
11. Repeat steps 3-8 again. Close the crate door as above. This time, walk out of the room for up to one minute while your dog is eating. Return to open the crate door again before your dog has finished eating.
12. Repeat steps 3-8 again. Close the crate door as above. Stay in the room and occupy yourself with something else while your dog eats (e.g. read a book or do some housework). This time,

do not open the crate door straight away. Keep yourself busy for 5-10 minutes, then open the crate door and lift your dog out.

Tip: If your dog starts crying when in the crate, then do not rush immediately to comfort them. Keep an eye on the situation, wait for a lull in the crying if possible, then open the crate door. Avoid making a fuss of your dog at this point. Check that the crate is comfortable and that your dog has enough to do in there, e.g. provide extra chew toys if needed. You may need to repeat a few steps of the crate introduction process until your dog is more confident, e.g. go back to step 10 or even earlier.

13. Over several days, gradually increase the length of time that your dog spends inside the closed crate. Leave the room for increasing periods of time with your dog in the crate.

I don't have enough time for crate introduction. What should I do?

If your dog has been prescribed crate rest to start immediately, then you will need to compromise a little with the introduction process. The crate may need to be introduced over several hours rather than several days. Follow the steps of method 2 as far as possible. To speed the process along, divide your dog's daily food ration into 4-6 tiny meals, and use each of these meals to help with the crate-training process.

Even if crate rest must start the same day, do make a point of setting the crate up comfortably before showing it to your dog. In an emergency situation, crate contents can be made safe and comfortable using whatever is to hand, e.g. doormats and bathmats offer non-slip footing, and old towels or blankets make useful bedding.

Owners occasionally find themselves in the position of having to put their dog straight into the crate with almost no introduction period. For example, this may happen if your dog has just returned home in the evening after an emergency operation. Even in the immediate situation, you do need to set the crate up comfortably and safely before the dog goes into it, so let the veterinary staff know if you need a little more time— they may be able to postpone your dog's discharge from hospital until the next morning.

Go through the crate introduction steps as shown above if at all possible. However, if your dog is not interested in food due to illness, then you will not even be able to tempt them into the crate using food. If you are unlucky enough to find yourself in this situation, then the best that you can do is to set the crate up comfortably, then guide or lift your dog gently inside it, before closing the door gently. Remember that your dog will be put off the crate if their first experience of it is unpleasant, so avoid slamming the crate door, do keep your voice pleasant and kind and, even if you need to be quite firm with your dog, handle them with "kind" hands (avoid tight gripping, pushing and shoving).

What to do if your dog won't stop crying

If your dog cries and refuses to settle down in the crate, then do not immediately rush to comfort them. Otherwise, they will soon learn to make a noise to get your attention instead of resting contentedly.

Firstly, be sure that your dog's crate is comfortable with sufficient bedding, toys and water, and check that your dog is not sitting in a draught. For details on crate comfort, see "How to set up your dog's recovery crate". If you need to approach the crate to make any changes, then aim to do this during a lull in your dog's crying if possible.

Recheck your dog's routine – have they been taken out to the toilet recently, and have they had a reasonable amount of attention from you already that day?

If the crying continues for no apparent reason, then do check on your dog now and again to be sure that they are safe. Keep your voice calm, quiet, and boring when checking on your dog, so as not to appear to "reward" them for the crying. If you have to check on your crying dog during the night, then keep the lights dim and your voice low. Your dog needs to learn not to expect attention at certain times of the day and night.

Food-dispensing toys such as Kongs® are useful for bored dogs. If your dog is restless then, instead of using a food bowl, consider feeding your dog's entire daily ration from food-dispensing toys to keep them occupied. Aim to offer the food or toys during a lull in the crying if at all possible. For more information on using food-dispensers, see "Toys".

Some owners do resort to sleeping in the same room as their crated dog for the first night or two. This is not always a good idea, as it can be difficult to get out of this routine once started.

If you are concerned that your dog cannot settle down, make an appointment to see your vet. They will be able to assess the whole situation, including checking that your dog is on sufficient painkiller medication. Bring along a photo of your crate set-up if possible as this gives useful information.

Why does my dog need a crate?

Following either spinal injury or surgery, your dog's body needs time to heal. Tissues around the damaged part of the spine will be sore and inflamed to start with. A sudden jolt to the spine, which could be caused by jumping or falling, could be disastrous.

A crate helps prevent your dog from running about, jumping on and off furniture and using the stairs. Each patient is different, so check with your vet as to exactly what your own dog is and is not allowed to do. In most cases, the following activities are *not* allowed, at least until very late in recovery:

- Jumping (e.g. on or off furniture).
- Stairs.
- Running.
- Rough play with children or other dogs.
- Playing with balls.
- Walking on slick floors (this includes most wooden, laminate, tiled or linoleum floors unless they have a particularly grippy surface).

Your dog will certainly need to stay secure in their crate whenever you are out, asleep or busy. Whenever your dog leaves the crate, they need to be on the lead or carried (see p18-20) to prevent any rushing about. Dogs are creatures of habit, and they will instinctively move fast to jump onto an old favourite sofa, respond to a doorbell, or to play with another dog, even if their body is not yet strong enough to withstand this.

There is another reason to confine your recovering dachshund to a crate: Many dogs with disc disease find it difficult to place their paws when walking. They may even put their paws down upside-down or drag their legs. During recovery, your dog needs to learn to walk properly again, placing each paw the right way up. If recovering dogs are allowed to rush about with their paws upside-down (or dragging themselves along), then this abnormal way of moving will soon become a habit. Confining your dog to a smaller space will help prevent them from forming a long-term habit of dragging themselves around.

The crate needs to be large enough for recovery

Even if your dachshund tends to choose to lie in a curled position, the crate needs to be big enough for your dog to do the following:

- To lie fully-stretched out.
- To turn around easily (without being forced to turn too tightly).
- To rise to a "sitting" and "standing" position (even if your dog cannot yet do this unaided).
- To yawn and stretch.
- To eat, drink, and chew on toys.
- To walk a few steps (even if your dog cannot yet do this unaided).

Given the right conditions, the body has a wonderful ability to heal and recover. Starting immediately after spinal injury or surgery, the nervous system goes through a gradual rewiring

process. New connections are made between nerve cells in response to how the dog attempts to move. This healing mechanism is called “plasticity”. It involves both a learning process, and physical changes occurring within your dog’s nervous system. If all goes well, this leads towards a functional recovery, i.e. the dog learns to stand and then walk again.

Your dog’s attempts to move from one position to another, to stand, and to turn around in the cage will all help them learn to walk again. Although we must confine our recovering dogs to keep them safe, we do therefore need to give them enough space to move around a little.

For at least a few weeks, your recovering dachshund will be spending nearly 24 hours in the crate. Unless the crate is a pleasant, comfortable space, your dog will feel miserable. A tiny crate can therefore cause many problems. Of course, none of us want our dogs to feel miserable. Aside from this, dogs need to be in a calm, positive state of mind in order to learn (e.g. when learning how to stand and walk again). Furthermore, some dogs develop behavioural problems if they hate their crate. For example, stress may cause them to bark uncontrollably, chew at their own legs, or wee every time they enter the crate.

A tiny crate is too cramped a space for comfort. Following a long plane journey, we tend to feel cramped and perhaps a little stiff having been confined to a small seating area, even if we have had the opportunity to walk up and down the aisle for toilet breaks. Bear in mind that your dog is probably feeling somewhat stiff and sore anyway following their injury or surgery, and that their crate confinement will last far, far longer than a plane journey. For the health of their muscles, joints and circulation, dogs need the space to yawn and stretch, to move around a little, to face in a choice of directions and to move between different positions.

Keeping your crate-confined dog calm and content

- Make a regular daily routine for your recovering dog. This should include toilet breaks, exercise as prescribed by the vet, mealtimes, interactive “quality time” spent with you, and times of the day when your dog should learn not to expect any attention. Your dog will be less stressed if they know what to expect (see p26, “Daily routine for the recovering dachshund”).
- Do provide a large enough crate or pen for your dog, and set it up as comfortably as possible. During recovery, your dog’s crate is his or her own little world for much of the day and night. Sufficient space and bedding will make a difference to your dog’s well-being, and some dogs will not settle down if they are positioned in a draught or are too hot or cold. For full details, see p13-16, “How to set up your dog’s crate”.
- Offer suitable toys to your dog. Chews and food-dispensing toys such as Kongs® are particularly useful (see p16, “Toys”).
- Do your best to stay positive whenever talking to or handling your recovering dog, even if you are having a bad day. This will make a big difference to your dog’s well-being, as our canine friends are quick to pick up on our emotions.
 - Speak kindly to your dog rather than snapping or shouting at them. To encourage your dog to wake up and come with you, try an upbeat, higher-pitched voice. Speak in a slower, more soothing tone to encourage your dog to calm down.
 - Always handle your recovering dog gently (have “kind hands”). Do your best to avoid gripping your dog rigidly, or digging your finger-tips into them, both of which can hurt and put your dog on edge. This goes for whenever you are helping your dog in or out of the crate, lifting them, doing prescribed massage or anything else. A gentle stroke over your dog’s shoulders is usually a good start to whatever else you need to do. Keep a harness on your dog at all times. You can then restrain your dog, if needed, by grabbing the harness rather than by grabbing the dog.
 - Whenever your dog does something good, reward them immediately by saying “good boy/girl” and, at the same time, offering a small food reward. This helps them learn to cooperate with you.
 - A simple firm “no” may occasionally be needed to make it clear that your dog has just done something unacceptable. Be sure to reward them as soon as they do the right thing.
 - Avoid punishing your dog during recovery as this is likely to lead to behavioural problems. Avoid hitting, tapping or shaking your dog, rattling their crate bars, slamming their crate door, shouting or ranting at them. Remember that your crate-confined dog cannot go off and hide from an angry owner. If you feel full of bottled-up frustration, it may be best to put your dog safely into or his or her crate and then leave the room until you have calmed down.
- Dog Appeasing Pheromone (DAP) is produced by mother dogs to make their pups feel more content and calm. The same chemical is available in synthetic form (currently sold as

Adaptil® in the UK) as a diffuser, spray or collar. Try getting a DAP diffuser and plugging this in very close to your dog's crate for its calming effects. In addition, DAP spray can be used on bedding within the crate to help your dog feel at home. The diffuser and spray appear to be more useful than the DAP collar during crate restriction.

- Some dogs appreciate a change of scene now and again. Even if your dog is only allowed to walk for five minutes at a time, this does not necessarily have to be within your own garden.
 - Consider getting a dog pushchair (stroller) so that you can take your dog to the park or woods. Lift your dog out for their prescribed amount of timed lead exercise, then put them back in the chair to rest. They'll enjoy being allowed to sniff somewhere new. For safety, be sure to clip your dog's harness to the pushchair during use, and always keep a close eye on your dog.
 - If your dog is comfortable in the car, then consider driving them somewhere more interesting for one of their daily short lead walks. Remember not to get carried away and walk for too long. It is important that your dog stays safe on the journey. Lift them in and out of the car and be sure that they will not jump off, or fall from, a car seat. For travel, the best option is usually to put your dog into a well-padded travel crate. Once your dog is stronger and can control their own position fairly well, then they can travel safely on a seat while restrained with a travel harness.
- If your dachshund is keen to be busy and wants to interact with you, consider setting aside some time for them to play quiet games with you. The best games for recovering dachshunds involve "sniffing and searching" for hidden food. Running, ball-play and rough play must be avoided for safety. For details on playing with your recovering dachshund, see p27, "Quiet games for recovering dogs".
- Keep an eye on your dog to check how well they cope with "traffic" around their crate. Some dogs like to see, hear and smell what is going on at all times. Others get upset by the comings and goings of people and other dogs near their crate. Bear in mind that a crated dog cannot escape from the sound of family games or arguments. If household bustle and noise seems to be making your dog anxious, then consider moving the crate to a quieter part of the home, and/or partially covering it with a sheet or blanket.
- Consider leaving the radio or recorded music playing at certain times of the day to help your dog settle down. Try playing your usual favourite radio station if your dog is already familiar with this. Or consider using an audiobook (try one aimed at school age children), gentle classical music or soft reggae, as studies have suggested that each of these may have some calming effect on dogs. Remember that your confined dog cannot escape from noise, so set the music no louder than a gentle speaking volume.

How to set up your dog's recovery crate

What type of crate is best for my dog?

There are two options:

- 1) A dog crate
- 2) An indoor dog pen

Whichever you choose, it needs to be sturdy enough to withstand some knocks and chewing. A purpose-built metal or heavy-gauge wire structure is best.

Whether to get a pen or a crate depends on the personality of your dachshund. Consider whether your dog ever attempts to get through barriers. If your dog will definitely not think of jumping out, and if they are not strong or wilful enough to knock over something heavy, then they will probably do well in an indoor dog pen. Open-top pens are readily-available with side height options of 80 cm or 106 cm, either of which would be taller than a standard stairgate. Open-top pens tend to offer more floor space than crates. Another good point about crates is that they provide easier access to the dog than do closed-top crates, as you can open the door and step inside.

The main benefit of closed-top crates is that they prevent your dog from attempting to climb out. If there is any possibility that your dog might try to escape, then a closed-top crate is of course essential. Even if your dog does not escape from the crate, they may be injured if they make frantic attempts to jump.

Most crates and pens have a raised "lip" at the exit. Dachshunds should not attempt to step over this lip, at least until very late in recovery. If you have the choice, opt for a crate with a floor level exit. If the crate does have a lip, then you will either need to lift your dog in and out each time, or use one of the following solutions:

- a) Get a foam mattress cut to fill the base of the crate. This should be just thick enough to bring the floor within the crate up to the same level as the top of the lip. Also, get a non-slip ramp made to lead up into the crate.
- b) Some owners remove the crate lip with a hacksaw, before filing the edges smooth and/or covering them with strong sticky tape. However, modifying the crate will void its guarantee and, in some cases, will prevent the door from closing or make the crate less stable.

Crate size

The crate or pen must provide ample room for your dog to lie fully-stretched out, to sit or stand facing in a choice of directions, to yawn and stretch, to turn easily, to eat, and to lick or chew at toys. The width (shorter side) of the crate should be longer than the length of your dog. Otherwise, your dog will need to turn tightly within the crate. For each type of dachshund, recovery crates should therefore be much larger than puppy crates.

For recovery, miniature dachshunds should have a crate or pen with a floor area of at least 75 x 95 cm. An even larger area is preferable unless your vet has stated otherwise. Suitable options for mini dachshunds include:

- ✓ 6 panel Barkshire Heavy Duty Dog Pen. Set it up in rectangular format to give a floor area 76 cm x 158 cm. Panel height is either 80 cm or 106 cm.

- ✓ Other pens as listed below for standard dachshunds. Check with your vet that they are happy with the more generous space allowance.
- ✓ XL Crate or larger. The XL size is 42 inches (107 cm) long. The width is not so generous, being only about 72 cm. Go for an even larger crate if possible, e.g. the XXL/48 inch one.

Standard dachshunds should have a crate or pen with a floor area of at least 105 cm x 125 cm. This is to give them enough turning room. Again, a larger area is preferable, unless your vet has stated otherwise. Suitable options for standard dachshunds include the following:

- ✓ 6 panel Barkshire Heavy Duty Dog Pen. If set up in rectangular format, the 6 panel pen is only 76 cm wide, which is too narrow for all but the smallest standard dachshunds. Set the pen up in hexagonal format to give your dog more turning space.
- ✓ 10 panel Barkshire Heavy Duty Dog Pen. This offers 160 x 160 cm floor area which is a good space for most recovering standard dachshunds. Two of the panels can be used to limit the width to 80cm during the first few days of recovery if required.
- ✓ 8 panel Ellie Bo Heavy Duty Modular Puppy Exercise Play/Whelping Pen which gives 158x158 cm floor space and is 80cm tall.
- ✓ Barkshire Uptown Dog Pen is more expensive but looks sturdier than the other pen options. It comes with panel height options of 122 cm, 150 cm and 170 cm, which should prevent the most determined dachshund from escaping. Floor area is 150 cm x 150 cm.
- ✓ If you must go for a crate, then the smallest option that could be considered for standard dachshunds would be the 48 inch (XXL) crate. This is only 77 cm wide, which will not give your dachshund much turning room. Few crates are available larger than this. The crate with the largest floor area appears to be the “Extra high giant dog cage” which is 137 cm x 84 cm.

Where should I put the crate?

Choose a position for the crate that will stay comfortable all day and all night. It needs to be placed away from draughts and out of direct sunlight.

If possible, put the crate into a room in which your dog has always liked to rest. Most dogs also prefer to be in an area of the house that is regularly used, so that they can see people coming and going now and again. However, if your confined dog seems to get upset by people or other dogs going past, then you may need to find a quieter spot. Bear in mind that your dog won't be able to escape from noisy family games or arguments.

It is best not to put the crate too close to the washing machine, tumble drier, TV or other machines, as the dog will not be able to escape from the noise or vibrations.

For most dogs, it is best to place the crate well away from radiators and heaters to prevent overheating.

However, if your dachshund loves warmth and always chooses to rest by a heat source then, in a cold house, you may consider putting one short end of the crate next to a fairly warm radiator. A small gap between crate and radiator will prevent burns. This gives your dog a chance to rest in a warm spot. If you try this, then it is essential to follow the following safety guidelines:

- ✓ If the crate is very small, then do *not* place it next to a radiator as the dog will overheat.

- ✓ Watch your dog very closely to start with. If he or she is panting, then move the crate to a much cooler position.
- ✓ Always have fresh water available inside the crate.

If draughts around the crate are unavoidable, e.g. at night, then use blankets over or around the crate as insulation (see p15-16).

What should I put in the crate?

Your dog will be inside the crate for nearly 24 hours per day, possibly for several weeks at a time. Do set the crate up as a pleasant home for your dog. If your dog is comfortable, then recovery will be easier.

Flooring

Many closed-top crates come with a removable plastic base that wobbles when stepped on. It's best to remove and discard this base as it tends to be slippery, unpleasant to walk on and can even scare some dogs. This will leave you with a wire mesh base which will need covering.

Dog pens typically have no base. Some will only stand up securely on a non-slip surface. A carpeted floor usually provides a good base for this type of pen. If the floor is not carpeted, then non-slip matting should be placed, and the pen set up on top of this.

If you are using a closed-top crate, then line its entire floor with non-slip matting. This is sold online by the metre by some flooring companies, and can be cut to fit the base of the crate. If the room has a slick floor, then buy extra matting to go outside the crate (see p18, "How can I keep my dog safe outside the crate?"). Alternatively, rubber-backed "dust trapper" type mats, door mats, or cheap rubber anti-skid bath mats can be used. The non-slip surface will prevent bedding from sliding around, and will help your dog learn to stand and walk more safely and easily.

Until your dog regains bladder control, you may need to cover part of the crate floor with incontinence pads in case your dog needs to pee unexpectedly (see "Toileting", p24). If you do opt to put down pads, ensure safe footing by putting non-slip matting directly underneath. Otherwise the pads will slip about when stepped on. This will reduce your dog's confidence and can be dangerous.

Bedding

Soft bedding will keep your dachshund warmer and encourage them to rest. Include items that smell familiar to your dog if possible, as this will help him or her to feel at home.

Bedding for dogs that cannot get up without help

Dogs with severe disc disease may be unable to get up from a lying position. These dogs need to lie on a well-padded surface to prevent pressure sores. A flat block of high density foam is ideal, and this can be bought to your specification from online foam suppliers. Some suppliers will also make a cover for this type of pad. The foam pad must cover a large enough area to support your dog in a fully-stretched out lying position.

- a) Some owners have a pad cut to fit the base of the crate exactly. NB: if your crate has a raised lip, then get the pad cut thick enough so as to bring the height of the crate up to the level of the lip.
- b) If your dog is in a very large pen, you may prefer not to cover its entire base with foam, but just to get foam cut to fit across its width. This leaves some less-padded floor space on which your dog can stand during later stages of recovery. A large step down from a raised bed would not be safe so, in this case, get the foam cut as thin as possible while still offering sufficient padding.

In an emergency situation, a folded quilt or several layers of blankets could be used as the basis of bedding for a collapsed dog while foam bedding is unavailable.

On top of the padding, place a layer of Vetbed® or a towel for extra absorbency and softness. Have spares available in case of soiling. In addition, disposable incontinence pads can be placed directly under the dog if required.

If your dog is unable to stand, then he or she will need to be turned at least every four hours to help prevent pressure sores. Rolled or folded towels are sometimes useful for propping a dog into a comfortable position, and cushions or gel pads occasionally prove useful as extra padding. The needs of each patient are different, so ask your dog's vet or hospital discharge nurse for details on positioning, padding and turning.

Bedding for dogs that are able to get up and move about

If your dachshund is able to turn over and move around a little, then a specialised foam pad is not necessary. Do provide a cushioned area large enough for your dog to lie on fully-stretched out. A large dog bed shaped like a flat pad would be fine for this purpose. You might be able to use your dog's usual soft bed. However, some dog beds have a raised edge which is too high to step over during recovery. If you don't have a suitable dog bed, then use either a small folded quilt or blanket to create a soft lying area. A piece of Vetbed® placed on top will make the bed even nicer to lie on.

For comfort, the non-slip matting adjacent to the bed should be covered with Vetbed® or fluffy bath mats. Be aware that some dogs will chew anything put into the crate, and that this could make them very ill. Keep a close eye on your dog to start with, as items may need to be removed if your dog turns out to be a persistent chewer.

Extra bedding to stop draughts

Your dachshund is not likely to relax if placed in a cold, draughty position. Do crouch down and check for draughts at dog level, particularly at night. You may need to tuck a blanket between the crate and the house wall to stop a draught. Some people wrap a cot bumper around the crate. Others find that their dog settles best if the crate is partly covered with a sheet or blanket. It is best to keep at least one side of the crate uncovered to allow for some airflow, and so that you can check on your dog.

Food and water bowls

Your dog needs fresh water available at all times. If a dog bowl might get knocked over, then opt instead for one that clips to the inside of the crate. For safety, choose a clip-on bowl that fits neatly against the crate wall and has no sharp projections.

Most crate-confined dogs eat all of their meals inside the crate. Food can either be put into a bowl or, to give the dog something interesting to do, it can be offered from food-dispensing toys such as Kongs®. Many owners use both methods, i.e. they offer a small amount of food from a bowl in the crate twice a day, plus they put filled Kongs® or other food-dispensing toy into the crate as extra mini-meals. For more about food-dispensing toys, see below under “Toys”.

Toys

Dogs soon get bored in a crate, so you’ll need to have a few toys ready as a distraction. It’s best not to give all the toys to your dog at once, but to offer them in rotation. That way, they’ll seem more interesting.

Though some dogs do enjoy soft toys, crated dogs particularly enjoy playing with objects that they can lick, chew, or get food out of. Most dogs love to work for food.

Hollow Kongs®, maze feeders and puzzle feeders are designed to release food gradually during play. Before filling these toys, do check how much your dog is allowed to eat per day. Daily food intake often needs to be reduced during recovery, so check with your vet if you’re not sure. Measure the total ration out, setting some aside for later in the day. If your dog needs plenty to do, then you could offer the total daily food ration from food-dispensing toys (Kongs® or maze or puzzle-type feeders). Or you may prefer to divide the daily ration between toys and meals fed from a bowl.

Kongs® can be filled with kibble or tinned dog food. To avoid your dog chasing after pieces of scattered dry food, it’s best to first soak the kibble in water for 30 minutes. You may also like to smear some of your dog’s tinned food over the opening of the Kong® to seal in the filling.

To create a dog ice lolly, prepare the Kong® as described above, then place it into the freezer for at least two hours. Wipe it over with a warm damp cloth to prevent freezer burn before offering to your dog as a long-lasting treat.

Maze or puzzle-type feeders are usually designed to be filled with dog kibble. For the more complex puzzle feeders, you may need to help your dog initially by showing them how to release the food.

Don’t be tempted to use peanut butter, cheese or other high calorie foods inside the food-dispensing toys. These are too fattening and may also lead to digestive upsets. If you want to add something extra to your dog’s diet, then ask your vet to recommend suitable low-calorie dog treats. Carrot sticks or apple chunks can be hidden inside Kongs®, or consider boiling or microwaving carrot, apple or sweet potato to make a tasty puree with which to seal up your dog’s Kongs®. There’s no need to add milk, sugar or anything else. Fruit or vegetables should only be added to the diet very gradually, and be aware that some foods, including grapes, are unsafe for dogs and must not be fed.

Rawhide and other chews are further options for keeping your dog occupied. Be aware that all chews, including simple rawhide, contain plenty of calories, so they need to be factored into the dog’s diet.

Tips on toy safety for recovering dogs:

- Choose hard-wearing toys designed for the size of your dog.
- Avoid toys with squeakers or loose parts, in case your dog swallows or inhales these.

- Dispose of damaged or broken toys promptly.
- Avoid balls and other bouncing toys, as these are likely to cause leaping and chasing behaviour.
- Avoid rolling food-dispensers until very late in recovery as dogs like to chase these.
- Every time that you offer a new type of toy, watch your dog closely to start with to check that he or she is playing safely. If your dog starts to leap about with the toy or to chase it, then remove the toy until a later stage in recovery.

How can I keep my dog safe outside the crate?

The recovery crate or pen is designed to protect your dog from over-activity. You also need to know how to keep your dog safe outside the crate as, no doubt, you'll want to spend some quality time together each day. And, of course, your dog will need to leave the crate safely for regular toilet breaks.

Once again, the general rules during recovery are:

- No jumping (e.g. on or off furniture).
- No stairs.
- No running.
- No rough play with children or other dogs.
- No playing with balls.
- Avoid slick floors.

So you need to help your dog avoid all the above whenever he or she is out of the crate. Recovering dogs must stay on the lead whenever outdoors.

Indoors, whenever your recovering dog is outside their crate, they should either be on the lead, or carried in your arms. This ensures that they do not rush across the room or make a dash to jump onto the sofa.

Your dachshund will need a harness instead of a collar during recovery from IVDD. The harness fits around the dog's centre of gravity and avoids the delicate neck structures. This is not only important for safety and comfort, but it also helps your dog learn to walk again more easily.

The top of the harness acts as a safety "grab handle". You can reach for this strap if your dog attempts to leap or if he or she starts to lose their footing at any stage. When sitting and relaxing together, do keep a gentle hold of the harness just in case your dog starts to run off unexpectedly (e.g. in response to the doorbell).

Some dogs get excited and attempt to rush out past their owner when the crate door is opened. This is a moment when accidents easily happen, so do be careful when opening the crate door. If your dog is in a large pen, then you should be able to step inside and close the pen door behind you, before picking your dog up or leading them carefully out. If using a closed-top crate, then you'll need to reach inside and get a careful hold of your dog before guiding them out. It is a good idea to leave the harness on your crated dog at all times. You then just need to get a hold of the top strap of the harness to steady your dog before lifting or guiding them safely out.

Slippery floors must be avoided during recovery. Most laminate, wooden, tiled or vinyl floors are too slick for safety. Carpet is fine. If your floors are slick, then place enough non-slip matting to create a safe route from the crate to the outdoor toileting area, and wherever else your dog may need to access. For small dogs, another option is to carry your dog over any slick floors throughout recovery. In any case, it is a good idea to place a piece of non-slip matting just outside the exit to the crate. This allows your dog to step out of the crate safely, even if you are then going to lift them.

Ensure that the route outdoors is step-free. Doorsteps and garden steps must be totally avoided, at least early in recovery. At each recheck appointment, check with your vet as to what your own dog is

allowed to do. Late in recovery, your vet may be happy for you to walk your dog very slowly over a shallow step if restrained on a harness and lead.

If you must avoid steps and there is no step-free route out of the house, then either lift your dog or provide a ramp. Ramps must be well-secured, sturdy and non-slip. An improvised plank of wood is *not* a safe option. Consider using a canine car ramp or, for a long-term solution, get a carpenter to create a ramp to fit your space.

Choosing a harness and lead

Harnesses with a “Y” shaped front are generally best. Designs with a “T” shaped front tend to constrict the dog’s shoulders.

Mekuti and Perfect Fit are two suggested harness brands. Mekuti harnesses are more hardwearing and weatherproof, and they have side rings which can prove useful when clipping a dog into a pushchair. Perfect Fit harnesses are softer and have more size options available. Before ordering, measure your dog’s “girth” (deepest chest measurement at a level just behind the elbows).

You will need a fixed length clip-on lead. A $\frac{3}{4}$ ” soft fabric lead is ideal. One that feels fairly soft in your hands will give you better control over your dog, and will be much more pleasant to use throughout your dog’s recovery. Even if set to a short length, an extendable lead will not allow you to control your dog’s speed easily, as the lead itself is not designed to be gripped with a hand, and the handle is unwieldy.

Lifting and carrying your recovering dachshund

Lift your recovering dachshund carefully. When carrying your dog, support his or her whole body. If the dog’s hindquarters dangle from your arms, then the back may get twisted or injured by sudden movements. Do not attempt to lift your ill dachshund in one hand. Always have both hands available.

In order to lift your dog from the floor, the safest way is to crouch right down to dog level, then use both arms to scoop the dog up. Put a supportive hand under the dog’s ribs (just behind the front legs). Spread this hand so that it supports as much of the front end of your dog as possible. Your dog’s rear end must also be supported. Either use a hand to support under your dog’s bottom, *or* use a hand to support under the dog, between the hind legs. Some people find it easier to support the dog’s rear end in the crook of their arm, rather than using a second hand.

To carry your dog, use one or both forearms to support the entire length of the dog close to your chest. Keep a supportive hand spread out under your dog's ribs while carrying.

If you are not able to get down on the floor and back up again, e.g. due to stiff knees, then you will need to find another safe way to lift your dachshund. This can prove quite challenging. The important thing is that you support the length of your dog's body while carrying, and that they do not jump up to reach you. Some owners need the support of a floor cushion, stool, or chair while lifting their dog. The best solution varies depending on how much both you and your dog can manage. Finding a safe way to lift your dog can take a little time but is very important. If you are collecting your dog following spinal surgery, then discuss this with the discharge nurse or vet. The best solution is often found during the first session with your dog's physiotherapist.

Walking with your recovering dachshund

Top tips

- ✓ All walking should be on a harness and lead, even for toilet breaks.
- ✓ Time the walking sessions, following your vet's guidelines as to how long they should be.
- ✓ Walk very, very slowly. Your dog should be walking, not trotting or running.
- ✓ Early in recovery, avoid kerb steps and other changes of ground level.
- ✓ Avoid long grass, slippery mud and very uneven surfaces until late in recovery.
- ✓ Watch out for signs that your dog is tiring, and be ready to stop for a break.
- ✓ If your dog cannot stand, or cannot walk at all, then support the rear end with a sling. (p23)

Your vet should give you guidelines as to how long to walk with your recovering dog each day. On return home from hospital, walking sessions must be kept very short. Give your dog a chance to pee and poo, and then carry them back in. As a general guide, plan on giving your dog 3-5 of these daily toilet break sessions (all on the lead), each no more than 5 minutes long. If your vet gives different guidelines for your dog, then do follow their advice.

Your dog will gradually be allowed to walk for longer over the following few months. There is no set programme for this: exercise must be built up depending on your dog's stamina and progress. Every dachshund is different. Ask your vet for advice at each recheck appointment. If a physiotherapist is overseeing your dog's recovery, then they will reassess your dog and organise an exercise programme including walking.

When walking your recovering dog on the lead, do walk very, very slowly. This will help him or her to get better sooner. A very slow walking speed gives your dog the chance to try and use each paw properly. This is an important part of the process of learning to walk. You will have previously become used to your healthy dachshund trotting or running next to you when out on walks together. During recovery, they should be walking, not trotting. This will feel very, very slow to you, so do be patient.

Your dog may find it easier to rush forward, especially if you are supporting their hindquarters in a sling. Remind your dog to go slowly (check back gently on the lead and harness, and walk at an ultra-slow pace yourself), otherwise they'll end up having to rely on a sling for far longer than is necessary. Later in recovery, your dog may be able to walk but sometimes place their hind paws oddly. Even at this late stage, it is important to walk slowly, again to encourage your dog to place each paw correctly.

Early in recovery (at least throughout the sling-walking stage), only allow your dog to walk over the easiest surfaces such as mown grass, artificial turf and concrete. Avoid rough/long grass, sticky mud and very uneven ground as they are too challenging. Gravel is unpleasant for dogs to walk on, so should generally be avoided while your dog has great difficulty walking. Take care to avoid big changes in ground level. Until your dog can manage them, avoid kerb steps by taking a different route or lifting your dog.

Dogs recovering from IVDD get tired surprisingly quickly. While starting to relearn how to walk, your dog's legs may become exhausted after just a few steps. Watch out for signs of tiring, and be ready to stop and give your dog a break. This may be the time to pick your dog up, to put them into a pushchair, or to encourage your dog to rest on the ground for a minute or two.

Signs of tiring

If you notice one or more of the following, then your dog probably needs to rest:

- Paw-dragging getting worse during a walk.
- Paw-knuckling getting worse during a walk (i.e. paws placed upside-down more often).
- Head position getting lower during a walk.
- Dog trying to rush ahead more and more during a walk, dragging themselves forward with their front legs (yes – trying to rush ahead is often a sign that the dog's rear end is tired).
- Muscles starting to tremble.
- Dog loses mental focus or concentration during a walk. For example, you may find that your dog starts to ignore your commands or becomes increasingly difficult to steer in any particular direction. In general, if your dog is starting to ignore you, then try giving them a short break as they may well just be getting tired.

Getting tired is part of the recovery process. As muscles start to work again, they may tire within a few seconds. As an example, imagine a totally unfit person trying to do twenty press-ups. It is best for your dog to walk as well as possible for just a short time (even if just for a few steps), and then to take a break.

Sling-walking

Some dachshunds need sling-support when walking. This is to prevent the hind legs from dragging along the ground and getting scuffed or damaged.

If your dog is able to stand and walk a little, then it is better not to use a sling. It is easy for dogs to become reliant on sling-support when they don't necessarily need it. Give your dog very frequent breaks (see "signs of tiring", above). If your dog starts to tip or lose balance, then you may need to bend over or crouch down now and again to nudge your dog gently into a more balanced position or to offer a few seconds of support from your hands.

If your dog cannot stand, or cannot walk at all, then a sling is usually the best option. There are three main types of sling:

- a) A long padded band that goes under the dog's belly, with handles for the owner to hold above the dog. You can improvise by using a strong scarf or strip of towelling.
- b) A long fabric support with a hole for each of the dog's hind legs. This fits around the dog's legs, not under the belly. Again, there are handles for the owner to hold above the dog.
- c) A specialised whole-body harness, e.g. "Help 'em up harness", with integral chest and hindquarter supports. These are good but are generally more convenient for tall dogs, as the handle is just over the dog's rump.

Option (b) is usually best for dachshunds. This puts the support where it is needed, around the hind legs, rather than under the belly. Option (a) is more readily-available, and many owners and dogs do fine with this. Whichever sling you use, be sure that its edges do not chafe the skin.

When using a hindquarter sling, it is essential to have your dog on a chest harness and lead at the same time. A lead attached to a neck collar would not be safe: whenever your dog loses balance or misses their footing, too much pressure would be put on the delicate neck structures. If your dog is off the lead, then you have no control of their speed or direction. Your dog needs to move slowly while learning to walk and, for safety, they must not rush off. You will need one hand on the sling, and your other hand on the lead.

Don't lift your dog's rear end far off the ground with the sling. If your dog's rear end is held very high off the ground, he or she will not get the chance to learn to walk. Keep the sling as low as possible without the paws getting dragged or scuffed.

If you are able to do so then, now and again, bend or crouch over in order to help your dog get into a balanced "stand" position (p28-29). This will give your dog a nice opportunity to attempt a walking step. Even if they just use their hind paws to push off the ground before you start a little sling-walking, then that is a good thing.

Toileting

Some IVDD dogs have poor bladder control during the early stages of recovery, and some won't even be aware that they are peeing. If your dog is returning from hospital, then ask the discharge nurse to advise you: they will know what stage your dog is at with toileting. You may need to cover part of the crate floor with either newspaper or incontinence pads in case your dog needs to pee unexpectedly (see flooring, p14)

Once your dog is able to pee outdoors fairly reliably, then it is usually best to remove the paper or pads from the crate. This makes it clearer to your dog that the crate floor is not a toilet. Of course, it is essential to continue to take your dog for frequent outdoor toilet breaks.

Most dogs go through a ritual of sniffing the ground before toileting. Remember to give your dog the chance to do this.

Some dogs insist on certain types of ground for their toilet area, e.g. short grass. Set your own dog up for success by leading or carrying them to a place that they have previously used as a toilet.

Dogs find it far easier to pee or poo if they are in a comfortable standing position. Many dogs cannot manage toileting while held off the ground in a hindquarter-sling. If your dog has trouble standing, then you may initially need to bend or crouch over and help your dog stand with all four paws on the ground at toilet time. Be patient; the better your dog gets at standing, the easier toilet-time should get.

If using a sling that loops under your dog's belly, watch out for problems caused by the sling. In male dogs, the sling may interfere with peeing if it covers your dog's prepuce. You may need to adjust the position of the sling or cut a bit out of it to allow space. For either sex of dog, the sling may press on the dog's bladder. If this seems to be a problem, then try standing your dog straight and letting the sling go slightly slack when your dog needs to pee.

Indoor "accidents"

If your dog pees or poos indoors, then please be patient. Some IVDD dogs initially have poor control of their bladder and bowels, and your dog may not even have been aware of what was happening. Other dogs have got past that stage but remain confused with their toilet training, or simply struggle to get outdoors in time. Whatever the cause, it's never a good idea to tell your dog off for indoor "accidents". Scolding makes dogs confused and stressed, and this can make the problem worse.

Clean the area well with a product designed for eliminating pet stains so that your dog doesn't start to think that this part of the house is a dog toilet. It is best to avoid using ammonia-based cleaners: it is said that some dogs choose to pee where these have been used.

Check that your dog is not soiled. Pee or poo stuck to the skin will cause sore areas. If needed, wash off any contamination with plenty of lukewarm water. If you need to do a major clean-up, then rest your dog on a non-slip bath-mat in the bath, sink or shower tray for this. Towel-dry and, if needed, finish drying with a hair-drier (not too hot) so that you don't leave your dog wet and chilled.

Remember to take your dog outdoors for plenty of toilet opportunities. For most dogs, a toilet break is worthwhile first thing in the morning, last thing at night, and shortly after each meal. See how

your own dog gets on. Note the time of any accidents, and reschedule future toilet breaks accordingly.

Bladder expression

It is possible that your vet may ask you to express your dog's bladder as part of the home care routine. Do *not* attempt to express your dog's bladder unless your vet has told you to do this. The vet or nurse should show you exactly how to express your dog's bladder before you go ahead, as a safe technique is essential. They'll also tell you how often this needs doing.

The aim is eventually to have your dog peeing at the right time, and in the right place. This is mainly a learning process. If you do have to express your dog's bladder, it's best to do this in your dog's toilet area. This helps your dog relearn the "right" place to go. For example, take your dog outdoors to stand him or her on a patch of grass for bladder expression rather than trying this over a sink, drain or indoor incontinence pad.

Toileting: when to seek professional advice

If your dog does not poo for over 2-3 days, then ask your vet for advice. In a few cases, stool softeners, other medication or a change of diet are needed.

Your recovering dog should pee at least every 18 hours (healthy dogs will go more often than this). Phone your vet for advice if your dog is not peeing at all, i.e. not even passing wet patches on the floor. Your vet will need to check your dog if this happens. You'll be asked a few questions over the phone, and may then be asked either to bring the dog in immediately, or to book a same-day appointment.

Some dogs regain normal toileting behaviour within days, while others can take a couple of months to control when and where they pee and poo. If you are concerned that your dog is making no progress, or if they seemed to improve and then got worse again, do make an appointment to discuss this with your vet.

Daily routine for the crate-restricted dog

Help your dog recover by establishing a regular daily routine. If your dog knows what to expect, then he or she will feel that bit calmer. A regular routine can also help avoid practical problems involving sleep and toileting. The routine needs to work for you both, so organise timings around when you expect to be available. As far as possible, keep the routine the same on weekdays and weekends.

The routine needs to involve toilet breaks, feeding times and quiet times for rest. Later in recovery, your dog may also have a prescribed amount of walking to fit in each day, and perhaps some prescribed physiotherapy exercises. Make a point of spending some quality time with your dog at least once per day in addition to the above. This may involve just sitting together with them in front of the TV, or may involve grooming, quiet games, massage if you have been shown how to do this, etc.

Plan one or two quiet rest times of the day during which your dog should expect no interaction with you. These quiet rest times may each eventually be up to three to four hours long if your dog settles well into a crate rest routine, and will hopefully give you some opportunity to leave the house. From the start, schedule these quiet rest times for periods of the day when you are most likely to be absent or busy.

During at least the first week of crate rest, it is best to be available at home for your dog most of the time. Start the routine straight away, but do be patient with your dog as this is all new to them. Your dog will eventually start to expect certain activities at regular times of the day, so think ahead and organise a routine that should continue to work for you both.

A summary of what to include in your dog's daily routine:

- **Three to five outdoor sessions on the lead for toileting.** These toilet breaks should generally each be no longer than five minutes long to start with (follow your vet's advice). Most dogs will need to go out for toileting as soon as they wake up, last thing at night, and after each meal. Adjust this as needed to suit your dog. Once your dog is able to walk, your vet may ask you to increase the length of the outdoor sessions week by week until they become proper walks.
- **Two or more meals fed at regular times inside the crate.** Either offer your dog's main meals from a bowl or from food-dispensing toys.
- **One or two regular daytime resting periods** during which your dog learns not to expect to interact with you. These periods may eventually be up to three to four hours long if your dog settles down well.
- **At least one regular slot of "quality time" per day**, during which you spend positive time with your dog. This is your opportunity to stroke or groom your dog, to play safe quiet games, or just to sit together in front of the TV. (For safety, do remember to keep a hold on your dog's harness whenever he or she is relaxing with you!) If your dog has been prescribed physiotherapy exercises, massage, etc., then these can be included as "quality time". Some dogs love attention and will enjoy at least three sessions of owner interaction per day.
- **Regular evening bedtime**, after which the dog is left to sleep undisturbed in the crate.

Quiet games for recovering dachshunds

All dogs in crates should be offered suitable toys (see “Toys”). If your dog is still bored and wants to interact with you, then consider getting his or her mind working with some quiet games. These must be chosen carefully for safety. Avoid games involving chasing, vigorous pulling or rough and tumble. Ball play and tug-of-war are therefore not suitable.

Keep any games calm, keep your dog on a harness (plus lead if necessary) throughout each game, and reward your dog with praise and little food rewards, not with a rough and tumble session.

If your dachshund cannot yet walk, then set the game up within easy reach of their nose. Dachshunds love to sniff and search, so games based on hidden food often go down well. Remember that food for these games must come out of your dog’s daily ration (i.e. measure what you are offering, and give them that bit less at dinner time).

Sniff & search game. Try teaching your dog some basic “nose work” to search for bits of kibble or low calorie dog-treats. Start by dropping a little food on the floor in front of your dog, say “Find it”, and encourage your dog to search for, and eat all the bits of food. Next, cover your dog’s eyes while you drop some food. Uncover your dog’s eyes. Again, say “Find it”, and encourage them to search for, and eat, all of the food.

To increase the challenge, hide bits of food under pieces of fabric, cardboard or upturned egg-boxes. Your dog might start nosing or digging under some of the objects to reach the food. Up to a point, this is fine. If the game causes your dog to get very over-excited then it is safest to stop just in case of injury.

“Which hand?” game. Put kibble or a treat in one hand. Leave the other hand empty. Show both closed hands to your dog. Can your dog work out which hand the treat is in?

Interactive food-dispenser games. Choose from the various interactive food-dispenser games on the market. For dogs with poor mobility, the tray-shaped games are best. Food is hidden in compartments, and is accessed by nuzzling, sliding, lifting or pushing flaps aside. Place it on the floor, prop your dog up in a comfortable position, sit with your dog and help them get started. Nina Ottosen (e.g. Dog Brick™) and Outward Hound are two brands that supply suitable interactive games. Keep a close eye on the situation, as dachshunds have strong jaws and may damage this type of game if they get too enthusiastic.

Physiotherapy exercises

Top tips

- ✓ A physiotherapist can organise an exercise programme for your dog: Ask your vet for a referral.
- ✓ Exercises must be adjusted to suit each dog's progress. Your physiotherapist can advise you.
- ✓ The very basic exercises are the most important ones, e.g. the "supported stand".
- ✓ For safety, your dog should wear a harness whenever doing exercises.
- ✓ Only do exercises on non-slip surfaces.

The body has a wonderful ability to heal and recover after injury or surgery. During recovery, dogs have to *learn* how to coordinate their legs again. This learning process starts immediately after surgery or injury, and continues for many months. If the damage has not been too great, IVDD dogs can eventually regain the ability to stand and walk again.

Dogs learn from the situations in which they find themselves. If a recovering dachshund is only ever stood or walked in a hindquarter sling (with bottom high in the air), he or she will be slow to learn how to walk normally, with all four paws on the ground. It is essential for these dogs to be regularly put into a position in which they can learn how to stand and balance.

Good exercises help improve coordination, balance and strength, and are great for setting your dog up for successful walking.

However, safety is key, and it is better for your dog to do no exercises at all than to do them badly. Ask your vet before starting any exercises with your dog. They can refer you to a physiotherapist who can assess your dog, pick out appropriate exercises, and show you exactly what to do.

Your dog should wear a harness while doing any exercises. This allows you to adjust your dog's position without pulling on his or her neck. It is also important for safety, as the top strap of the harness can act as a handy "grab handle" if your dog starts to lose balance.

During recovery, exercises should be very basic to start with so that they are just within your dog's "comfort zone". Your dog needs to learn to stand before learning to walk. Walking on easy, level surfaces is simpler than managing slopes, steps and tricky surfaces such as long grass.

Activities that would challenge a healthy dog, such as balancing on a wobbly object or stepping over raised obstacles, should be left until late in recovery or avoided altogether. If your clinician asks you to use equipment for home exercises, then be particularly careful. It is of course important that your dog does not slip or trip, and that equipment does not roll onto or fall onto your dog.

The "standing practice" exercise described below is suitable for most IVDD dachshunds so long as the listed safety guidelines are followed. As for any exercise, check with your vet before starting this. For most IVDD dachshunds, "standing practice" can be started the day after returning home from spinal surgery, or the day after injury if the dog has not had an operation.

"Standing practice" exercise

This is one of the most important exercises for the management of IVDD. It helps teach your dog to hold a standing position, the ability to do this being central to recovery. Your dog needs to learn to

stand before being able to walk again. Once you have mastered helping your dog with this exercise, it can be modified to improve your dog's strength and coordination.

For safety: You will need an area of non-slip flooring (carpet or non-slip matting). Your dog will need to be wearing a harness (See p19). You will need to be flexible and nimble enough to sit or kneel on the floor while supporting your dog (You may want to rest yourself on a floor cushion or use kneeler pads for comfort).

Technique

- Pick a time when your dog is awake and interested.
- Sit or kneel on the floor with your dog on the floor in front of you.
- Position your dog so that he or she is facing away from you. The tail should be just in front of you, and head facing away from you.
- Use both hands to ease your dog gradually up into a standing position. You may find that the middle and/or rear of your dog is floppy. Support the weight of your dog as best you can.
 - You can put a hand under your dog's ribcage (behind the front legs) to support some of the weight.
 - You can support your dog's hindquarters with a hand far back under the belly.
 - Some people "sandwich" the length of their dog's body between their outstretched forearms. This is a really useful way to stop the dog from flopping over to one side. You'll need to get your arms down very low near to the floor for this technique.
 - If sitting or kneeling on the floor just behind your dog, you may find it helpful to use your knees to help prop the dog up.
 - If your dog tries to wriggle about or rush forward, then tuck your fingers around one or more of the harness straps for safety.
- Your dog's hind paws will probably be floppy and upside-down. If you have a hand free, then place each hind paw gently on the floor the right way up. To prevent your dog from falling, continue to support him or her under the chest or belly while you do this. It can be helpful to work with a friend the first few times if you feel that you need an extra pair of hands.
- Hold your dog in that nice straight standing position for 5-10 seconds. You may need to correct the standing position during that time, e.g. the paws might flip upside-down and need replacing the right way up. Have a friend help you the first few times if needed.
- Gradually lower your dog's rear end to the floor, then gently lower the front end so that your dog can rest.

Support your dog in a standing position one to three times per day to start with. Over the following days to weeks, you can increase the challenge as follows:

- Once your dog can support a little more of their own weight, try supporting them a little less strongly. Keep your hands in position, so that your dog cannot fall. If your dog could previously not stand, then they will get exhausted really quickly (imagine having to hold a press-up position if not used to doing this). Be prepared to offer full support again after a second or so if needed. Day by day, your dog will hopefully get stronger.
- Once your dog can stand a little, then help him or her to hold the standing position for longer each day.
- Have a physiotherapist show you how to do the following:
 - To help your dog practise moving between lying, sitting and standing positions.

- To help your dog stay straight in the standing position (i.e. with the back not curved off to one side).
- Weight shift exercises and/or paw placing exercises in a supported standing position.
- Eventually, how to move off into a walk step from a supported standing position.

Massage and “passive range of movement” for your dog

Some owners of IVDD dachshunds are asked to massage their dog during recovery. The aim of this is to improve blood flow and to help your dog to recover normal sensation.

For some dogs and owners, this is a pleasure. However, if done incorrectly, massage can be uncomfortable and even painful for dogs. Similarly, “passive range of movement” exercises (moving your dog’s legs around in a prescribed way) is not a good idea for every dog, and will be painful if performed incorrectly.

Only attempt massage or passive range of movement under professional guidance. Ask your clinician to show you exactly what to do by demonstrating on your own dog, then have them watch you try the same procedure in front of them and ask for feedback.

If massage or passive range of movement have been prescribed, but they seem to cause your dog distress or discomfort at home, then stop and contact your clinician for advice. If necessary, ask your vet to refer you to a physiotherapist who can teach you what is required.

If attempting either massage or passive range of movement at home, find a safe, padded surface on which your dog can rest while you do this:

- You could sit on the floor while your dog rests in front of you on a folded blanket or piece of Vetbed.
- If your dog is recovering in a pen, then you could step inside with your dog, and do the massage while your dog rests on their bed.
- It is not advisable to rest your dog on a sofa or other raised surface during massage, as they could seriously injure themselves by jumping or falling to the floor. unexpectedly (e.g. if the doorbell goes). If you must rest your dog on the sofa, then they should wear a harness throughout, and you will need to keep particularly close control.

While doing either massage or passive range of movement, always keep an eye on your dog’s face. If your dog is not quite happy with the situation, then you may notice one or more of following:

- Tense, anxious expression around your dog’s eyes.
- Dog licks lips repeatedly.
- Dog yawns, perhaps more than once.

If you notice any of the above, then pause what you are doing. Relax and take a deep breath, then start again more slowly and even more gently.

Practical advice on massage:

- The basic technique for dog massage is similar to a stroking movement. Don't apply more pressure than for a simple dog-stroke. Too much pressure can be painful.
- Start in the direction of your dog's fur. Start where your dog is most comfortable about being touched (often over the shoulder area).
- Make sure that you are sitting comfortably. You shouldn't end up with sore arms or neck. If you find yourself having to twist your arms or wrists while massaging your dog, then try sitting in a different position. If you are tense and crooked, then this will transmit to your dog.
- Try an alternate-hand stroking movement. Always keep one hand on the dog (as one hand comes off, the other goes on).
- Move your hands fairly slowly. This helps to keep everything calm.
- Keep your hands "soft" (i.e. not tense). Avoid digging your fingertips into your dog, as this can be uncomfortable.
- There are several possible massage techniques. Your physiotherapist will be able to give advice specific to your dog.

Further advice on passive range of movement

- Only do passive range of movement with your dog if your vet or physiotherapist has asked you to. It is a difficult skill to learn well and not all IVDD dogs need it.
- For passive range-of-movement exercises, position yourself and your dog comfortably as for massage.
- Your dog needs to lie resting on one side for passive range of movement. Do not attempt this technique while your dog is either lying on its front or half-sitting.
- Always prepare your dog by doing a little massage first.
- Passive range of movement involves bending and straightening your dog's legs, one by one, while your dog rests. It must be comfortable throughout. If your dog looks uncomfortable, then stop.
- With your dog lying on one side, work with the uppermost legs (those furthest from the floor).
- Support and guide each leg as you bend and straighten it. Do not grip, yank or force a leg to move.
- During the bending and straightening movement, support the leg so that it is about parallel to the floor. Don't lift the leg up towards the ceiling, or let it flop down towards the floor.

Physiotherapy sessions

Physiotherapy is beneficial from an early stage whether or not surgery is planned. If your dog is to have spinal surgery, then look for a physiotherapist straight away. Good, safe physiotherapy will benefit your dog from day one after the operation.

Choosing a physiotherapist

Before your dog sees a physiotherapist, they must be referred by a vet. This is a legal requirement in the UK. Your vet may or may not be able to recommend a good physiotherapist. It can be worth asking around or searching online to find the best person to help your dog.

Choosing a suitable physiotherapist is not always straightforward because there is no single qualification to look out for. To make things more confusing, some physiotherapists also refer to themselves as rehabilitation practitioners. In the UK, it is a good start to opt for a clinician belonging to one of the governing bodies IRVAP, NAVP or ACPAT. Full members of these groups hold professional indemnity insurance, hold an accredited qualification, and should keep up-to-date with some new training each year.

For your IVDD dachshund, look for the following in a physiotherapist:

- ✓ Good training and clinical experience *with dogs*, i.e. not only with horses and humans.
- ✓ Someone who pays attention to safety, e.g. supporting your dog safely and using non-slip surfaces.
- ✓ Someone who you feel able to talk to. They should listen to your questions and leave you feeling confident about how to care for your dog at home.
- ✓ Someone who is happy to help you and your dog improve at functional tasks, e.g. managing sling-walking for toilet breaks.
- ✓ Someone who focuses on your dog's general wellbeing during recovery, i.e. the therapist should aim for your dog to be comfortable, happy, confident, and to cope well in your home with your family.

Of course, your physiotherapist should handle your dog gently.

Getting the best from your physiotherapist

It is a good idea to bring notepad and paper to each session because you will probably come away with plenty of advice. If you have a smartphone, and if your physiotherapist does not mind, then it can also be useful to get video snippets of any techniques that you are taught (e.g. massage).

A home visit is useful so that the physiotherapist can tailor their advice to the dog's surroundings. If sessions are held at the clinic, it is a good idea to bring photos of the dog's recovery crate, the garden space if this is used for toilet breaks, and the route from crate to garden.

Bring information from the surgeon or referring vet if this is relevant. For example, some surgeons send each patient home with a home advice sheet, which is a print-out detailing what the animal is and is not allowed to do. The physiotherapist will need to work within these guidelines.

If you have questions, then bring a list of these with you and make them a priority early in the session. Physiotherapists are usually well-placed to answer questions relating to your dog's functional tasks (getting up, walking, etc.), and can assess whether or not your dog is distressed or in

pain. For practical issues such as how to lift your dog, allow time for your physiotherapist to teach you exactly what to do.

Useful questions during the first session might include:

- How should I lift my dachshund? Do point out any specific worries you have about this, e.g. if you have stiff knees then the physiotherapist may need to find a way for you to lift your dog without getting right down onto the floor.
- Does my dog need a hindquarter sling and, if so, how exactly should I use it?
- Does the crate look suitable for my dog? If your physiotherapist cannot do home visits, then bring along a photo of the crate set-up.
- What's the safest way to sit on the sofa with my dog?
- What's the best way to support my dog in a standing position? This is outlined on p29, but best technique varies depending on the shape of dog and owner, so it is useful to be taught this rather than learning it from a book.

For each of your practical concerns, it is worth letting your physiotherapist demonstrate how to do the task with your dog, talk it through with you, then give you the chance to have a go. If time is short, and your physiotherapist can do no more than answer the above questions in the first session, then that is time well-spent.

Depending on the case, physiotherapy sessions for IVDD dachshunds may also include massage, joint range of movement exercises, treatments such as low-level LASER or pulsed electromagnetic energy (PEME), postural exercises, and supported walking. Early exercises may include "supported standing", "supported sit" and "standing weight shifts".

Physiotherapists need to work within their scope of practice. For example, a physiotherapy qualification does not enable someone to change your dog's dose of medication, to advise which diet to use, to diagnose your dog's condition, or to solve complex behaviour problems. Your physiotherapist should work closely with your vet, either letting your vet know if anything changes, or advising you to make an appointment with your vet if appropriate.

Staying positive during your dog's recovery

Keeping your recovering dog safe and comfortable is quite a challenge. Many owners feel frustrated when their dog has to be confined to a crate. If this applies to you, then you are not alone. Caring for yourself will benefit both you and your dog, as negative emotions easily pass from us to our canine friends.

Some tips to help you stay positive:

- Do start a regular routine for your recovering dog. Be sure to include particular times of the day when he or she should learn not to expect any interaction from you. Dogs need some rest time during the day, so don't feel guilty about this.
- Remember that quality time spent with your dog does not have to be time spent walking together.

- If your dog has always chosen to come and sit with you, then make a point of simply relaxing quietly together at some point each day during recovery. You can sit together on the sofa if this is what your dog is used to, perhaps while reading or watching TV. Be sure to lift your dog safely on and off the sofa, and restrain them safely at all times: It will soon become second-nature to keep the fingers of one hand tucked around one of your dog's harness straps just in case your dog has the impulse to jump or run.
- Physiotherapy exercises and prescribed massage can give you and your dog something good to focus on together each day. Ask your vet for referral to a physiotherapist who will be able to teach you what is required.
- Even if your dog is not allowed to walk far during recovery, do continue to make a point of getting plenty of fresh air and exercise yourself.
 - Consider buying a dog pushchair. Choose a design that can be used off-road, so that you can continue your own usual walking regime without over-exerting your dog. Lift your dog out of the pushchair for the few minutes of exercise that they are allowed.
 - In mild dry weather, you may be able to relax outdoors or do the gardening with your dog in an outdoor enclosure. This gives you both a chance to enjoy some fresh air. Some recovery crates and pens can be easily reassembled outdoors for temporary use on grass. Position the pen with one end in the shade, and be sure to have water available for your dog at all times.
- If you are feeling isolated, then consider joining an online support group for owners of recovering dogs. The dog-owning community is typically happy to welcome others into a group and to offer moral support. Practical tips may be offered on dog forums, but be aware that not all of these will be safe or relevant to your own dog, so always check with your vet before making any major changes to your dog's regime.
- Now and again, consider either getting a friend to take over dog-minding duties, or employing the services of a pet-sitter or dog-walker. Do go through exactly what is needed with them in advance though, as your dog's safety is important.
- Seek good practical support and advice early on. Your vet or surgeon should give you general home care guidelines for your dog's recovery, including "do's and don'ts", how much to walk your dog each day, and advice on diet. For further guidance, your vet can refer you to a physiotherapist who can help organise a safe daily routine for your dog from day one. If you are very concerned about your confined dog's behaviour, then ask your vet for advice and, if needed, consider requesting a referral to a rehabilitation or behavioural specialist sooner rather than later.