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## Physical Rehabilitation for Dogs Part 4: Laser Therapy

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Laser therapy burst onto the human physical therapy (PT) scene over the past ten years. Laser machines, once novel equipment, began to appear in virtually all PT clinics. I know this from first-hand experience. Back in 2007, I made the 80-mile round-trip to a sports doctor to get laser treatment on my Achilles injury. By the next year, laser machines became available in 3 different PT clinics that I visited (for various reasons).

And now, laser therapy is also available in many canine rehabilitation clinics and doctor's offices as a viable alternative modality to help in the healing of many soft tissue injuries.

Due to its unique properties, laser light is able to penetrate deep into tissues, making laser a therapy of choice when it comes to many muscular, tendon, and ligament injuries.

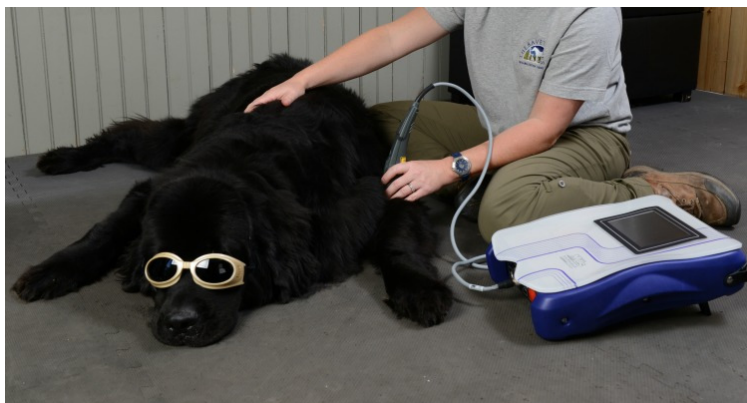


Photo Credit: Sorrento Animal Hospital

### The Theory Behind Laser Therapy

Energy that is produced by laser light is absorbed by the cells in the target tissues which in turn can lead to collagen synthesis, oxygen production, and other reactions that promote tissue repair and healing. Laser is also thought to facilitate the formation of new blood vessels in injured tissues, and has been found to expedite the healing of wounds and the healing of tendons and ligaments.

### Laser Therapy for Dogs

Like with other modalities, it is recommended that the dog's hair is clipped at the treatment area so that direct contact between the laser head and the skin can be created and maintained throughout the treatment. The skin should be cleaned and free of any substances including topical solutions (that might have been used earlier in the treatment). When dealing with wounds, there should be a gap between the laser head and the surface of the skin.

As previously stated, laser therapy makes sense when treating tendon and ligament sprains/strains, muscle strains, and wounds. Laser can also be used to reduce inflammation and thus, could be of help in the treatment of arthritis.

Applying cold packs before laser therapy is supposed to help the target tissues absorb the light, and thus, maximize the treatment benefits.

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