Soft tissue injury is the all-encompassing term we use for an injury to a muscle, tendon, or ligament. Unfortunately, in our veterinary patients, it can also be used as a non-specific diagnosis for cause of lameness that is not recognizable on examination or simple imaging.

We are relatively successful in treating these injuries in dogs with rest and pain management. However, there are subcategories of dogs that improve with rest but relapse after that period is over. Additionally, there are dogs that are expected to return to work ASAP after an injury.

Rehabilitation at an institution with trained CCRP personnel is always recommended for these patients but not always geographically or economically feasible. There are some exercises that can be performed at home safely in patients with soft tissue injuries. The presentation will demonstrate the exercises and the conditions in which they are safe.

**Passive range of motion exercises**
- The owner flexes and extends all joints for 10 repetitions holding the joint at the end of extension or flexion for a count of 10. The owners should flex and extend to the pain threshold and not go over. This should not hurt.
- This helps to keep the joints lubricated, reduce stiffness, and maintain or improve the overall range of motion of the joint.
- Safe in general for injuries that do not require splints or slings
- **THIS IS NOT STRETCHING** (stretching is avoided in the first 3 weeks of minor muscle or tendon tears)

**Balancing exercises**
- Several different methods starting with gently nudging the pet to cause a weight shift while standing. These can be stepped up to uneven surfaces like couch cushions to wobble boards.
- Can help improve coordination and hopefully, therefore decrease recurrence
- Isometric contractions are also good for most injuries as a way of maintaining function without straining the injured tissue
- Balancing exercises are safe for multiple soft tissue injuries

**Controlled exercise**
- Short, frequent walks are best initially. Control is key. Walk, not trot is important
- Patient/client selection is important
- Walking in water can also be encouraged though swimming is sometimes too much depending on the injury
- Start flat and hills can be added later at end of rest/rehab period (Assuming no lameness
- Good for muscle strains (i.e. iliopsoas) or tendonitis (i.e. patellar)

**Core strengthening**
- Alternating leg lifts on rear or front help to strengthen the core leg muscles
- Sit to stand
- Down to stand
- Sit/Down to stand on uneven surfaces
- Roll to sternal position from lateral recumbancy
- Appropriate for the majority of soft tissue injuries

Many of the exercises described have videos that owners can view on Youtube. The problem with many of them is that they also are advertising medications or other products.