

What to expect at your first consult

First time experiences can be daunting, so here are the steps I go through in your first myofunctional therapy consultation.

Step One: Acclimatisation

The first consult is all about getting to know each other – me getting to know you, the human client and your dog and vice versa. For the dog particularly, getting to know each other is extremely important if treatment is to be successful. Most dogs will be on guard or curious about a visitor in their house, not behaving like a “usual” visitor or acclimating to the treatment room setting. For me, it is really important that the dog feel comfortable before I start a treatment.

Step Two: Lifestyle profile

While the dog is getting used to me and the setting, we discuss the reason you have sought treatment. I also complete a lifestyle profile for your dog. The profile helps me pinpoint factors that may impact your dog’s muscle health and highlight any contraindications to treatment.

Step Three: Observation

Next, I observe the dog to identify deviations in movement or abnormalities in musculature. Typically, this assessment involves you walking the dog on lead a short distance around the room or up and down the hallway.

Depending on the problem area, I may ask the dog to negotiate some simple obstacles.

Step Four: Hands on examination

I gently touch the dog to feel for muscle knots, spasms, and adhesions. This examination also tells me where the dog is and is not comfortable being touched. This is important for me when treating the dog.

This examination is also the final check for any contraindications to treatment such as inflammation, broken skin or pain.

Step Five: Treatment Plan

Following the assessment and examination, I propose a treatment plan to you. The plan identifies the areas of the body that I think I need to focus on in the initial treatment and the results I expect to get from such a treatment. I will present my reasons for the plan and we can discuss the approach. I need your consent to the plan to start treating the dog.

Step Six: Treatment

In the first session, sometimes human clients are embarrassed or frustrated their dog doesn't just lie down and accept the treatment. Please understand the first treatment is always a bit random and completely dictated by the dog's need for space and time.

In the first treatment particularly, dogs often need frequent breaks because the treatment approach is foreign to them and probably a bit confronting. I like to let the dog move away and then decide to come back to the treatment. Sometimes, I only treat the dog in small bursts 20 – 30 seconds before they want to move off – that is OK. This is the way that I build trust with the dog. They need to know they have a choice about participating in the treatment. If the dog feels they have no option to leave, then that is a safety risk for me and you in a treatment setting.

In this first treatment, while it may appear I have only treated the dog in short bursts because of the assessment I have done, I can target that work to the areas that need it most. Even a small amount of work will move us toward the overall treatment goal.

Further, I have built the dog's trust so I am in a position to help the dog in subsequent treatments. If the treatment is rushed or forced, then it is possible the dog will be reluctant to allow subsequent treatments.

Step 7: Re-test / reassess

Following the treatment, I will re-assess the dog just like in step three (3) to determine the effectiveness of the treatment in terms of affecting movement, symmetry of the dog, or the specific issue identified before the treatment.

Step 8: Re-plan

Based on the effectiveness of the treatment plan, I will discuss how we can maintain the effects of the treatment or progress the dog to the objective we discussed in step five (5). This plan is unique for each dog but may include exercises you can do with the dog in the house or on the walk, environmental and/or lifestyle changes to prevent re-injury, or a maintenance programme.



While an initial consult will take approximately one hour, follow up treatments are very targeted and usually are completed in 20 – 40 minutes.

Dogs on maintenance programmes typically have a treatment every 12 – 15 weeks depending on their activity levels.

For more information about how myofunctional therapy may assist your dog please contact me at jconlon@fullstride.com.au or 07 3633 0964.

Full Stride Myofunctional Therapy & Nutrition