

POST-OPERATIVE INFORMATION

Your pet has just undergone surgery and anesthesia, and it is important to provide appropriate care over the next few hours and days. Please read this document in its entirety to learn what to expect and find answers to common concerns.

Anesthetic: Your pet received anesthetic for their procedure, which can cause sleepiness and/or nausea for up to 24-36 hours. Let us know if your pet shows signs of lethargy or lack of appetite for more than a couple of days. Normal coughing will occur since your pet had a trach tube placed for anesthetic.

Medications: Please follow medication instructions exactly as prescribed, and finish the entire course. Even if your pet does not seem to “need” their medication, it is important to administer it as instructed.

- Before taking your pet home after surgery, make sure you understand how to give them their medicine and what tools are required for dispensing them. Always use the measuring equipment provided, not your own measuring spoons or syringes.
- If you miss a dose, **do not double up on the next dose**. Resume the appropriate dosage schedule with the next treatment. Placing your pet’s medication in a plastic pillbox imprinted with the days of the week can help you avoid missing or doubling a dose. This is especially helpful if more than one person in your household is responsible for caring for your pet.
- **Do not give your pet any medications or supplements** without discussing it with your veterinarian. Human medications like aspirin, ibuprofen (Advil/Motrin), and acetaminophen (Tylenol) can be toxic to animals and may be fatal if given to cats.
- Many **liquid medications must be kept refrigerated**. Gently roll in your hand or shake them to remix prior to giving to your pet. If a medication that requires refrigeration is left unrefrigerated, please contact our office to find out whether it is safe to give to your pet or needs to be replaced.
- **Do not crush or cut tablets** unless instructed to do so. Crushed tablets can taste bitter and sometimes make it difficult to determine how much the patient has ingested.

Activity: Activity often must be restricted for a period of time - ranging from several days to many weeks depending on the type of surgery performed - to allow the patient to properly heal. While activity instructions may be difficult to live with, they are important. Make sure you understand what level of activity is or is not acceptable before bringing your pet home. Inadequately restricting activity is a common cause of post-op complications.

- Restricting a dog’s behavior can be challenging, especially when they begin feeling better. Doing so is absolutely necessary, though, even for playful puppies. You may need to keep your dog on a leash at all times - both inside and out. Crates are also useful. If you do not have a crate, consider keeping your pet confined to a small room, such as a laundry room or half-bath while they are recovering from surgery.

- When your veterinarian says it is time for your dog to start limited exercise, such as brief walks around the block or up and down the driveway, do not use a retractable leash. Even once your pet begins feeling better and wants to be more active, remain firm. Engage their mind by feeding using food puzzles or giving them an interactive toy that they can play with without getting up and moving. Kong-type toys stuffed with peanut butter are excellent and can keep your dog active and distracted for several hours.

Incisions: To prevent infection, surgical incisions must be kept clean and dry. If an incision becomes dirty, gently clean the area using a saline solution. Otherwise, leave it alone. Check the incision frequently to ensure that it is healing properly. Look for loose or missing staples or stitches as well as signs of infection, including swelling, oozing, pus, redness, heat, or unpleasant odor. Excessive licking can irritate an incision and cause infection or drainage. A normal amount of drainage is none to just a few drops.

- When your pet comes home, the incision may appear slightly puckered. However, as it heals, it should continue to improve to normal smooth skin. If it does not, a recheck with your vet is a good idea.
- Incisions typically heal within 7 to 14 days. External sutures, staples, etc. should be removed by the veterinary team. Some incisions are closed using buried, absorbable sutures that do not require removal. Your veterinarian will advise you whether or not there are staples or sutures that require removal, and when.
- Do not allow your pet to lick the incision. Licking can introduce infection and/or pull the stitches. The myth that saliva is helpful or has antibacterial properties is not true.

Bruising, Seepage, and Odors: Some bruising may be normal, but excessive bruising may warrant checking with your pet's veterinarian. Continual or a large amount of seepage of blood or other fluids from the incision is not normal, nor is an unpleasant odor coming from the incision. Please contact us if your pet experiences either of these things.

COMMON CONCERNS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- A decreased appetite typically is not a concern in the first few days after surgery. If your pet is not eating or drinking 24 hours after returning home, though, notify your veterinarian. Fresh water should always be available.
- Except for emergencies, pets are not fed for at least part of the day of and/or before surgery. As a result, many will not have a bowel movement for 1 to 2 days after coming home. This timeframe usually is not a cause for concern. If your pet does not produce stool for more than 2 days after returning home, please call us.
- Some incontinence after surgery is not unusual, and it should not last long.
- If your cat likes to lie down in their litter box, replace granular litter with shredded newspaper to prevent litter from getting in the incision.
- Hold off on giving your pet a bath until after the sutures are out and your veterinarian has given permission for bathing.
- E-collars are to be kept on at all times.
- After certain surgeries, your pet may need to be bandaged, splinted, or casted. All of these materials need to remain clean and dry. This means keeping your pet off damp

ground and out of the rain, puddles, mud, their water bowl, kiddie pools, and baths. If it is raining or the ground is wet when your pet needs to go outside, cover the bandage with a plastic bag. Bandages need to be checked a minimum of three times per day, but more frequent checks are preferred.

- Some animals, especially dogs, have trouble getting up or getting in the car after surgery and need a little help. A long towel can be used as a sling under the hind end to provide support. With a leash or harness on your dog, place the towel sling under the belly in a U-shape with the ends up over the back. Grasp the ends, and you can lift your pet fairly easily. Their toes should remain on the ground.

If your pet needs veterinary attention following their procedure, please contact us right away. If we are not open, please reach out to one of our emergency contacts.