

AFTER SURGERY CARE INSTRUCTIONS

What should I do when my pet arrives home after surgery?

After arriving at home, you should keep your pet warm and comfortable by providing a soft clean bed, ideally in a quiet and draft-free room at a comfortable room temperature (68-75°F or 20-24°C).

Your pet should remain indoors overnight, going outside only for short leash walks as needed to urinate and defecate. For most procedures, your pet's activity should be restricted for one full week after surgery. It is essential to avoid running, jumping, and other strenuous activity that could cause excessive strain on the wound.

When can I feed my pet?

A few hours after arriving at home, you may offer your pet approximately half of his normal dinner. If he eats this and still seems hungry, you may offer the rest of his meal approximately one hour later. Some pets experience nausea after general anesthesia, so dividing the meal into smaller portions may decrease the risk of nausea and vomiting.

Unless otherwise instructed, your pet's access to water should not be restricted.

My pet seems very sleepy. Is this normal?

Your pet was given a general anesthetic or a sedative. These drugs can take a number of hours to wear off and may cause some patients to appear drowsy for a day or so. Over the next 24-48 hours, your pet's behavior should gradually return to normal. However, if you are at all concerned, do not hesitate to contact the hospital.

Why has my pet's foreleg been shaved?

If your pet has a shaved area on one of his front legs, this is typically where the anesthetic or sedative was administered. Additionally, many pets receive intravenous (IV) fluids through an IV catheter during surgery and the hair must be removed to allow the area to be disinfected properly before inserting the catheter. Sometimes this area will be bandaged; if so, you can remove the bandage when you get home after surgery, unless otherwise instructed.

My pet has developed a slight cough since the operation. Should I be concerned?

Your pet may have had a tube placed in the trachea (windpipe) during anesthesia, in order to administer oxygen and anesthetic gas. This can occasionally cause mild irritation and a slight cough. A mild post-surgical cough will typically diminish over the next few days. If coughing persists or worsens, contact the hospital.

What should I do if my pet is licking its wound or chewing the stitches?

Your pet instinctively may try to clean his surgical site by licking. If you have been given an Elizabethan-type protective collar (often referred to as a "cone" or E-collar), please ensure it is used in order to

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prevent chewing. If you have not been given an E-collar and your pet begins licking or chewing the incision, please contact the hospital and request one.

Not surprisingly, many pets find these collars strange at first and will attempt to remove them. However, after a short period most pets will settle down and tolerate wearing the collar. It is better to keep the collar on all the time, rather than to take it on and off. It only takes a few seconds of chewing for a pet to remove his stitches or damage the surgery site. If your pet does succeed in removing any stitches, please call the hospital as soon as possible.

What should the incision look like, and when should I be concerned?

The incision should normally be clean and the edges should be together. The skin surrounding the incision should be a normal or slightly reddish-pink color. In pale-skinned pets, bruising is often seen around the surgical site. This may not appear until a few days after the operation and in some cases can seem excessive in comparison to the size of the incision. This is due to seepage of blood under the skin edges and is a normal occurrence. In some cases, a small amount of blood may seep intermittently from a fresh incision for up to twenty-four hours, especially if the animal is active.

If your veterinarian has inserted a drain into the surgery site, you may notice some discharge/ ooze over the next few days. This is normal and has been placed to encourage the movement of fluid away from the surgery site. To prevent the drain from clogging it is a good idea to clean the drain twice a day as instructed.

You should be concerned and should contact the hospital immediately if you see any of the following at the surgical site:

1. Continuous or excessive blood draining.
2. Intermittent blood seepage that continues for more than twenty-four hours.
3. Excessive swelling or redness of the skin.
4. Unpleasant smells or discharge.

When do the stitches need removing?

In general, most skin stitches or sutures are removed ten to fourteen days after the operation; the actual time depends on the type of surgery performed. You will be instructed if and when your pet should return for suture removal.

In some cases, your veterinarian may use sutures that do not require removal. These sutures are placed under your pet's skin and will dissolve in the coming weeks.

When can my pet resume normal activities?

This will depend upon the type of operation your pet underwent. In most cases, your pet's activity will need to be restricted for at least one to two weeks, or until the sutures are removed (if the sutures are

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to be removed). During this time, it is important to limit your pet's activity in order to prevent the incision from opening. It is also essential to avoid swimming or baths during this time, as moisture can help introduce bacteria into the wound and lead to infection. Your veterinarian will give you detailed instructions on activity restriction and any other post-operative instructions.

Will my pet receive medication after his surgery?

After surgery, your pet may be sent home with pain medications or other oral medications. If you have been given any medication to give your pet, please READ THE LABEL CAREFULLY and ensure that you administer all medication as instructed. If you are having trouble treating your pet, please contact the hospital for advice.