



Post Operative FAQs

What should I do when my dog 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 small room or crate at a comfortable room temperature (68-75°F or 20-24°C). Do not allow them to jump off and on furniture or go up or down a flight of stairs.

Your pet should remain indoors overnight, going outside only for short leash walks as needed to urinate and defecate. For most procedures, your dog's activity should be restricted for two weeks after surgery. It is essential to avoid running, jumping, and other strenuous activity that could cause excessive strain on the wound. This could cause a breakdown of the incision resulting in infection, spillage of contents and swelling.

When can I feed my dog?

A few hours after arriving at home, you may offer your pet approximately half of his/her normal dinner. If he/she 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 dog's access to water should not be restricted, however do not allow them to drink large amounts at one time, as this may result in vomiting.

My dog seems very sleepy. Is this normal?

Your dog was given a general anesthetic and 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. Keep them on non-slippery surfaces and stairs. Over the next 24-48 hours, your dog's behavior should gradually return to normal. However, if you are at all concerned, do not hesitate to contact the hospital.

Why has my dog's leg or legs been shaved?

If your dog has a shaved area on one of his legs, this is typically where the anesthetic or sedative was administered. Additionally, dogs 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 once at home from surgery unless otherwise instructed.

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

Your dog 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 dog is licking its wound or chewing the stitches?

Your dog instinctively may try to clean his surgical site by licking. 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 prevent chewing and licking. If you have not been given an E-collar and your dog begins licking or chewing the incision, please contact the hospital and request one. If your dog does succeed in removing any stitches, please call the hospital as soon as possible.

Not surprisingly, many dogs find these collars strange at first and will attempt to remove them. However, after a short period most dogs 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 dog to remove his stitches or damage the surgery site. If your dog 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 dogs, 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.

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

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

When do the stitches need removing?

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

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

If you have any questions regarding your dog's stitches, please call us.

When can my dog resume normal activities?

This will depend upon the type of operation your dog underwent. In most cases, your dog's activity will need to be restricted for at least two weeks, or until the sutures are removed (if the sutures are to be removed) and up to 10 weeks for orthopedic procedures. During this time, it is important to limit your dog'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.

Will my dog receive medication after his surgery?

After surgery, your dog will be sent home with pain medications or other oral medications. Please READ THE LABEL CAREFULLY and ensure that you administer all medication as instructed. If you are having trouble treating your dog, please contact the hospital for advice. Pain medications to make your pet comfortable are typically prescribed. These include non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (NSAIDs) and narcotic pain medications. Antibiotics may also be prescribed. Do not administer any medications not prescribed by your veterinarian- especially those intended for human use- as they can be toxic to animals.

My dog has not defecated yet, when should I become concerned?

Because anesthesia and narcotics slow gastrointestinal motility, many patients do not have a bowel movement for 1-3 days. Do not be concerned about this as long as your pet is eating, acting normal, and isn't straining to defecate. Note the consistency of your pet's stool and call if you note diarrhea. Your pet may need to urinate more frequently for the first day or two following surgery due to the intravenous fluids that are administered during anesthesia.

Please do not hesitate to call if you have any concerns or questions at any time while your pet recovers from surgery 804-277-8021