



After Surgical Care

What's normal?

Pets may be tired or groggy and want to sleep once settled down at home. This is ok and should improve somewhat the following day.

Swelling - Some mild swelling after surgery is normal. Please contact us if the swelling is increasing or feels soft and fluid filled.

Discharge – A small amount of watery to bloody discharge is normal. Please contact us if the discharge is excessive or changing color to yellow, green or white.

Bruising – Some bruising may also be normal post-operatively. Skin that is black, white or green however, should be rechecked by the doctor.

Pain/Discomfort – Just like us after a surgical procedure, some pain is expected. Animals show pain in a variety of ways. Some will howl or cry, some will pace or pant. Others may sleep to avoid the discomfort. Some will attempt to lick the area excessively. Some will act relatively normal but will still have discomfort. Some pets will be more likely to bite or snap due to pain while others may seem more needy. Pain should not be excessive.

Because animals react to pain in such a variety of ways, please use the pain medications as directed even if you feel they are acting normally. Pain medications are discontinued early only if the pet is having some problem with the medication itself. Like us, post-surgical pain will generally peak at 48 hours after surgery and steadily improve from there. Typically, most pain will resolve within 7-10 days.

Please let us know if you feel your pet is excessively painful despite medications as there may be more that can be done.

Feeding

Please offer small amounts of food and water once your pet has settled down at home. If they do well with this small meal, they can have the rest of their normal volume and return to their normal feeding routine the following day. Different instructions will be provided for any surgery involving the gastrointestinal system.

Medications

Most medications should be started the evening of the day of surgery. There are some exceptions, however. The medication bottles will be labeled if they are to be given only in the morning (AM) or evening (PM). Please do not administer any medications beyond those given for surgery unless specifically instructed by the doctor. If your pet is on other, regular medications, please alert us in case there are potential interactions.

Some pain medications may cause drowsiness and mild constipation. Anti-inflammatories and antibiotics may cause stomach upset. Giving medications with a meal can help with this problem.

Activity

This is one of the most important aspects of caring for your pet after surgery, but one of the most difficult for clients. Just remember this is short term. You can be tough for 2 weeks! Don't let them make you feel guilty...it's for their own good! For most surgeries, we want the pets on restricted activity for two weeks or until any sutures are removed. This means being crated when unattended, minimal stairs, and then only at a walk. No running, jumping or furniture climbing. They should be on a leash for short potty walks only.

Bandages

Bandages can quickly cause more harm than good if not managed correctly. They must stay dry and in the proper place. Even a small amount of movement or slipping can cause problems and must be addressed immediately. All bandages must be changed every 1-3 days depending on the nature of the wound. Wet bandages need to be replaced immediately to prevent infection.

Any swelling below or above a bandage must be addressed immediately as this may be a sign of infection or a bandage that is too tight.

Licking

Between healing incisions and shaved skin, many patients are itchy and will lick or scratch at both their incisions and catheter sites. There are only a few options to deter this behavior. But they can open or damage the incision quickly. Bandages, e-collars and t-shirts are our best methods. If your pet needs an e-collar, you can get one from us or the larger pet stores. Generally, the collar should be in place at all times until the incision is completely healed. An alternative that will sometimes deter licking (depending on where the incision is located) is a small t shirt with the dog's legs through the arm holes then the shirt is gathered and tied up at the back with a rubber band to take up the slack and prevent tripping. This is only a mild deterrent so monitor them carefully! Sometimes an antihistamine can significantly help this type of itch. Not every pet can take the same dose, and not all antihistamines are ok so call us first, and we will give you best options.

How to care for incisions

If drainage or discharge is occurring, a warm, damp towel may be gently held to the area until the debris is loosened and can be wiped away. Do not use alcohol, peroxide or other disinfectants.

Pets should not be bathed until sutures are removed, if present, and at least two weeks have passed since the surgery.

Pets can open incisions with or without sutures in place in a matter of minutes. Incisions and shaved areas are uncomfortable and itchy. Pets respond to both with licking and or scratching. Don't trust them! For wounds on the body, a small t-shirt over the wound is sometimes enough to deter and protect but some pets will require a collar or cone. Monitor your pet closely and use these devices if necessary.

Most importantly, if you are uncomfortable with any aspect of the post-operative care, please call.

You can reach us at 770-479-6505.

If we are closed, you can reach the emergency clinic for help and advice at 678-238-0700.