

Post-Operative Instructions

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Believe it or not, proper post-operative care can be just as important to your pet as the surgery itself! With the right care, your pet will experience less pain, anxiety, and risk of secondary infection, and she/he will enjoy a shorter recovery time. While every type of surgery requires slightly different instructions, we have listed some basic rules to keep in mind for almost any procedure your pet might undergo.

1. **Monitoring the surgical site:** All incisions should be kept clean and dry, unless you have been instructed to apply medication to the site. A little swelling, redness, heat, and bruising at and around the incision site are normal the first few days after surgery. However, an excess of any of these is reason to contact your veterinarian. A small amount of weeping of serum or blood is normal the first 24 hours, but should be addressed if it persists after this time. Any foul smelling, milky, or green discharge is not normal and can indicate an infection. Licking or chewing at an incision only makes matters worse by starting a vicious cycle of infection and inflammation. If your pet wants to lick or chew, an Elizabethan collar may be fitted to limit their access to the surgery site. Typical healing time for an incision is between 7 and 14 days. If your pet has external sutures or staples, they should be removed by your veterinarian or technician at 10-14 days. Sometimes, medical grade tissue glue is applied to the site at the time of surgery. The glue feels hard to the touch at first, but will begin to flake and fall off after a few days.

Animals that have undergone oral surgery may experience a few days of blood tinged saliva. Any foul smell from the mouth should be reported immediately.

2. **Administering prescribed medications:** Please give your prescribed medications at the time and for the length of time written on your prescription. The effectiveness of pain medications is dependent on time, so please try to give them at the recommended intervals throughout the day. The effectiveness of antibiotics depends on being administered the correct number of days, so please give them the full length of time prescribed. Your veterinarian will discuss whether medications should be given while fasted or with a small meal. Please do not be tempted to give human medications unless specifically instructed to do so by your veterinarian. Many human medications including Tylenol, Advil, and Aleve are toxic to dogs and cats.
3. **Restricting activity:** Activity restriction is greatly dependent on the type of surgery your pet has undergone. It can range from a few days while an incision heals to several months while a bone, muscle, or ligament heals. It is normal for your pet to feel mildly lethargic the first 24 hours after surgery, but remember that they will want to move around more the better they start to feel. Keep your pet on a leash when they are not in the house so that exercise can be controlled. Crate restriction may be necessary for some animals, especially energetic kittens and puppies.
4. **Diet and water restriction:** Restriction from food and water are also very dependent on the surgery, but most animals should not be fed or given water until late in the evening the day of surgery, or until they are

fully awake and have regained motor skills. It is normal for your pet not to have much of an appetite 24 hours after surgery. As a result, they may not have as many bowel movements the first 24-48 hours. If your pet does not have a bowel movement after 48 hours, please contact your veterinarian. Your pet should, however, drink plenty of water after the first 24 hours and should be monitored for normal urination.

As always, we are here to address any questions and concerns you may have. We wish you and your pet a short and peaceful recovery!