

# After Surgery: How to Care for Your Pet

Your pet has had major surgery and will need to be well cared-for afterwards to help prevent complications. Following the instructions below will help ensure your pet has a safe and comfortable recovery.

## 1. Limit Activity for 7-10 Days

- Strenuous activity, such as running, jumping or playing, could disrupt the healing process and even cause the incision to become swollen or open. To help keep your pet calm:
  - Place your pet in carrier, kennel, crate or small room when you're not able to supervise them. They must be able to stand up and turn around in the housing unit.
  - If your pet is small, carry them up and down stairs.
  - Walk your pet on a leash for potty breaks.
  - Do not take your pet for long walks, engage in rough play, or allow them to jump on or off furniture.
  - To limit your cat's activity, as well as help them feel safe and comfortable, place them in a quiet, confined area such as a bathroom, laundry room or kitchen where you can easily monitor their recovery. Remember to provide fresh food and water and a clean litter box.

## 2. Keep Them to a Regular Diet

- After surgery, your pet's appetite should return gradually within 24 hours. Give your pet a half-size meal when you bring them home, and then feed them their normal evening meal. Puppies and kittens may be fed normally. Water should always be available.
- Do not change your pet's diet at this time, and do not give them junk food, table scraps, milk or any other "people food." Changes in their diet could hide post-surgical complications.

## 3. Keep the Incision Dry

- Dogs and female cats have internal sutures that will dissolve after approximately four months. Surgical glue has also been applied to the skin to seal the incision against bacterial penetration. If you are told that your pet has skin sutures or skin staples, they will need to return in 10 days to have those removed.
- Do not bathe your pet during the recovery period (10 days) or apply topical ointment to the incision site. Pets must be kept indoors except for leash walks for potty breaks.

## 4. Check Their Incision Twice Daily

- Female dogs and cats have a mid-line incision in their abdomen. Male dogs have an incision on the scrotum, and male cats have two incisions, one on each side of the scrotum. Check these incision sites at least twice daily. What you see when we discharge your pet is what we consider normal.
- There should be no drainage, discharge or odor in females, and redness and swelling should be minimal. Male dogs may have small amounts of drainage or discharge for up to three days. Male cats may appear as if they still have testicles; this is normal, and the swelling should subside gradually through the recovery period. If there are any bumps or bruises present, they should decrease in size and appearance through the recovery period.

## 5. Monitor Pain Levels

- All pets receive a 24-hour dose of anti-inflammatory pain medication prior to discharge and some pets will receive additional medication to be given at home. If your pet appears to be in pain after getting home, please contact us.

- Our staff can assess whether or not your pet needs to be examined. Do not give human medication to your pet; it is dangerous and can be fatal.

## 6. Keep In-Heat Females Away from Males

- Keep neutered males away from un-spayed females. Neutered males can get an un-spayed female pregnant for up to 30 days after spay/neuter surgery. Keep spayed females away from unneutered males for 7 days. Animals returning from the clinic may also smell different to other animals in the household. This can cause the animals to fight, so be prepared to keep your pets in separate areas for a few days following surgery.

## 7. Look Out for Complications

- Spaying and neutering are both very safe surgeries; however, as with all surgery, complications can occur. Minimal redness and swelling of the surgery site should resolve within several days, but if they persist longer, please contact us. You should contact us immediately if you notice any of the following issues:
  - Pale gums
  - Depression
  - Unsteady gait
  - Loss of appetite or decreased water intake
  - Vomiting
  - Diarrhea
  - Discharge or bleeding from the incision
  - Difficulty urinating or defecating
  - Labored breathing
  - A small amount of blood in the urine may be present in female animals during the first 24 hours after surgery. If this continues or occurs at other times, please call us or your regular veterinarian.

## 8. Prevent Harmful Licking

- Prevent your pet from licking or chewing the incision site. Licking may cause the incision to become infected or open, which will likely require follow-up visits at a veterinary clinic at considerable cost. If your pet is licking, we recommend you distract your pet with treats and arrange a time to return to our facility or your local pet supply store to pick up an Elizabethan collar. This will prevent your pet from being able to reach the area.
- See the PREVENT HARMFUL LICKING handouts on our Website or Posters in our Lobby for more information.

## 9. Call if You Have Concerns

If you have any questions or concerns directly related to the surgery during the recovery period, please contact us.

EVERYPET will treat any post-operative complications resulting directly from surgery. **Please call (904) 425-0005 or [appointments@everypet.org](mailto:appointments@everypet.org) for a priority appointment as soon as you see cause for concern.**

We cannot be held responsible for complications resulting from failure to follow post-operative instructions or from contagious diseases for which the animal was not properly vaccinated. Any illnesses or injuries not directly related to surgery must be addressed by your regular veterinarian. **If EveryPet is your pet's primary veterinary provider, please contact us so we can assist with appropriate follow-up care.**