



# Spay & Neuter Post Surgery Home Care Instructions

Follow these directions carefully

## Feeding

- All animals can be fed **small amounts** of food and water the evening after surgery. **It is very important** that kittens/puppies under 16 weeks of age eat & drink small amounts directly after surgery, feeding canned food can encourage eating. All animals can eat normally the day after surgery. Your pet may have a decreased appetite and/or may vomit and have some diarrhea after surgery for 1 to 3 days.

## Activity

- **Please restrict your pet's activities for at least 10 days.** Keep your pet away from other animals and small children during recovery (24-72 hours).
- **Cats and kittens** need to be kept **INSIDE** for at least 10 days. To reduce activity/injury cats can be housed in a bathroom or small area with access to food, water, a litter box and bedding for at least the first 24 hours.
- **Puppies and dogs** must be leashed walked for potty breaks and should have **NO** off-leash activity for the next 5-7 days. To reduce activity/injury a crate/kennel can be used to keep dogs from running, using stairs or rough play.

## Behavior

- It is normal for your pet vocalize within the first 24 hours after surgery – this can be due to the anesthetic drugs given and does not necessarily mean your animal is in pain. Your pet may whine, whimper, meow or moan after surgery.
- Some drooling, shivering and panting may be seen after surgery due to stress and nausea. This should resolve over the next several hours.
- Your animal may have disorientation and some sedation for the next 24 hours after surgery. This may be displayed as staggering walk, stumbling, and lack of coordination and long periods of rest. Anesthesia may last in their system for up to 72 hours.

## Incision Care

- **Keep the incision clean and dry for 10 days.** Do NOT bathe your pet for 10 days. Please look at the incision once daily. There should be no discharge or foul odor coming from the incision. Slight swelling, redness or bruising is normal. Please refrain from applying any creams or ointments to the incision.
- **Do NOT allow your pet to lick or scratch the incision,** this can delay healing and cause infection. An E-Collar has been provided to prevent licking. The collar should remain on your pet for a **MINIMUM** of 7 days. Some animals react negatively to wearing an e-collar, please be aware of your animal's individual needs.

*\*\*All females altered have received a small line tattoo near or on the incision signifying she has been sterilized, hereby preventing unnecessary future surgery should she become lost, stolen or re-homed.*

### Pain Management

- Pain medication has been given to each and every animal. **Do NOT give your animal any additional pain medication. Additional medication can be life threatening.** Cats have been given Metacam® (5mg/ml) with fluids under the skin, according to weight after surgery. All dogs have been given a Rimadyl® injection unless otherwise noted.

*\*\*\*The Dumb Friends League will not cover costs incurred if you take your animal to your own veterinarian for any reason, please call the number below for surgery related concerns:*

For general post-surgery questions and concerns first contact the Dumb Friends League Return for Treatment at: (720) 241-7100



## Post-Surgery Frequently Asked Questions

**Q: "My dog/cat is whining/meowing constantly and I am worried it is painful. What can I give it?"**

A: "**DO NOT** GIVE over the counter pain medications. These medications may be okay to use in people, but they can cause a lot of health problems in animals such as stomach ulcers, liver failure and in some cases death. These medications will contain Ibuprofen, Acetaminophen (Tylenol), Aspirin and others. Your pet has received multiple types of pain medications that should take care of any pain or discomfort. The whining is due to the anesthetic drugs given for surgery, these drugs can cause your dog/cat to be confused and disoriented (dysphoric). We expect this behavior (as frustrating as it can be) for the next 12 to 24 hours as the anesthetic drugs wear off. You are welcome to take your dog for a short walk or offer a small amount of food.

If your pet is still acting uncomfortable and noisy the following day, please call the number you were given the day of surgery. If your pet is restless and cannot settle down you are welcome to put it in a crate only if it has been crate trained (dogs) and only if it has something in place to keep it from licking the incision (clothing that isn't too tight or cone collar)."

**Q: "Should there be any discharge from the incision site?"**

A: "As your pet becomes more alert after surgery, its blood pressure starts to rise. This can cause a little seeping from the incision: this is from the tiny vessels that run throughout the skin. This is normal for the first few hours after surgery, especially in large, older female dogs and male cats. The discharge can be red or a clear-pinkish color. Keeping your pet rested and quiet will decrease this. You can use a damp wash cloth to dab around the incision to keep it clean. Please do not rub or use any cleaners near the incision, and do not allow the actual incision to get wet. You can also apply a small amount of pressure using a piece of gauze or a clean cloth to the incision. Also applying an ice pack wrapped in a towel can cause the vessels to shrink up and decrease the oozing. There should not be any discharge after the first 12 to 24 hours.

Discharge that is creamy or colored (usually green, white or yellow) indicates infection. Infection at the incision site will break down the sutures too soon and will cause the tissue around the incision to die. If an infection goes on too long your pet may require another surgery to close the incision site, and it may also cause problems internally.

To prevent an infection **keep your animal from licking its incision**. This is usually how an infection starts. Despite the old wises' tale, the mouths of dogs and cats are not clean. Their mouths harbor a lot of bacteria which your animal will pass to the incision. Also keep your pet's incision clean and dry – this can be accomplished by putting your dog on a leash for walks or putting some form of loose-fitting clothing on it to keep the incision covered.

If you have done these things, and suspect there may be an infection: call the number you were given the day your pet had surgery to set up an appointment."

**Q: "What is an emergency?"**

A: "As listed above, mild oozing and whining within 24 hours is not generally an emergency situation.

However, there may be an emergency if you witness any of the following:

- Your pet's incision is oozing blood faster than you can blot it up.
- Your pet's abdomen is distended and bruised all over.
- Your pet cannot move or stand up three hours after surgery (however, it is very normal for a dog to get up, walk around briefly, and then lay down and return to sleeping the day of surgery).
- Your pet's gum color, if normally pink (some animals naturally have black, brown or spotted gums), is pale or white.

- Your pet appears to have difficulty breathing. Some whining or panting can be a common side effect of the anesthetic drugs in the first 12 to 24 hours. However, gasping or breathing with large chest movements may indicate your pet is struggling.

In case of emergency, first call the phone number you were given at time of surgery. If you are prompted to leave a message please do. If your phone call isn't returned within 15 minutes call again and listen carefully as there is information regarding what to do next on the answering machine message."

**Q: "My pet hasn't had a bowel movement yet, how come?"**

A: "Between the anesthetic drugs given and the time without a meal, this is not uncommon. Also, it is very common for your pet to defecate immediately before or after surgery while with us, so it may not need to defecate for an additional 24 hours. Sometimes the first stool may be a difficult one and you may see some blood due to the straining, but this is normal. Once the anesthetic drugs have worn off and your pet is back into its normal eating routine the stools should go back to normal. In some cases your pet may have diarrhea for the first couple of days. This is okay too, as long as the diarrhea stops. If it continues for several days we recommend seeking veterinary attention to make sure there is no underlying condition (parasites, stress, etc.) that may have been uncovered by anesthesia."

**Q: "Why is my pet drooling a lot?"**

A: "Your pet may drool a lot after anesthesia due to nausea, stress and the anesthetic drugs given. There is no need to be concerned as this will likely stop within a few hours."

**Q: "Why does my pet look like it was crying?"**

A: "We put a lubricant in the eyes for surgery to prevent the eyes from getting dry during surgery. Animals don't close their eyes when we put them under anesthesia, so without this ointment their eyes can get infections and ulcers."

**Q: "Why don't you send antibiotics home?"**

A: "The spay or neuter surgery your animal had today is a sterile procedure, meaning we use equipment that has been heated to a temperature that will kill bacteria and viruses. Antibiotics are usually prescribed if there is a break in sterilization or an active infection. Starting your pet on antibiotics when an infection isn't present can cause your pet's immune system to establish resistance to that antibiotic rendering it useless when your pet actually needs it."

**Q: "When should I be concerned about swelling?"**

A: "Swelling the first day is quite normal. The incision is fresh and the body is still working to heal it, so a little swelling is okay. Keeping your pet from licking the incision as well as keeping activity to a minimum will ultimately keep swelling down. Our biggest concern is the older male dog: these dogs come in to be neutered with a well-developed scrotum. During surgery we remove only the testicles and end up leaving, in some cases, a large amount of tissue behind. If these dogs are allowed to run, jump, play or lick before they've had time to heal from surgery their empty scrotum may begin to swell from small vessels in the skin around it. In some cases the swelling gets no bigger than what the dog looked like before it came to have surgery - this is less concerning. What we are most worried about is when the scrotum continues to swell and becomes as large as an orange. This is usually quite painful for your dog and in some cases requires another surgery to remove the scrotum and inflamed tissue. This surgery is more difficult than a routine neuter surgery and can easily be avoided by following post-surgical instructions.

Sometimes we see swelling around the spay incision that lasts quite a long time. In some cases the body builds up a wall of tissue around the sutures placed, seeing it as a foreign invader. We call these suture reactions and usually they are hard to the touch, but the cat or dog isn't at all

bothered by them. As long as the incision remains closed without any discharge, we expect these suture reactions to heal up within a month or so.

Other ways the body can deal with the surgical wound is by filling the tissue around the incision with fluid much like a blister. These are called seromas and in some cases can lead to infection. If your pet's incision has a fluid-filled balloon around the incision it may be a seroma and should be looked at by our veterinary staff. Please call the number you were given the day of your pet's surgery.

**Q: Is vaginal discharge normal?**

A: The only time vaginal discharge is normal is when a dog that was in heat has been spayed. You may continue to see bloody discharge for the next couple of days. The bloody vaginal discharge shouldn't come back again.

Any discharge that is green, yellow or milky usually indicates an infection. Infection can be seen with urinary tract infections, vaginitis and other conditions – these conditions warrant a trip to your veterinarian. Generally this discharge is not primarily connected with the spay surgery.