



FREQUENTLY ASKED POST-SURGICAL QUESTIONS

Q. My pet had surgery today and he/she is acting like she is in pain – can I give the pain medicine early?

A. Yes. Your pet has had injectible pain medicine at the time of the surgery. Typically they should not need more pain medicine until the next morning. But, all pets (like people) have different metabolisms and pain tolerances. You may start the pain medicine early if you feel you need to.

Signs of pain include: vocalizing, not being able to lay down comfortably, and shaking or trembling – trembling can also mean that they are cold (an effect of the anesthesia). Throw an old towel or blanket in the dryer to heat it up and wrap your pet up. This will go a long way to making them feel better.

Q. My pet had surgery today and now his/her face is swollen, and/or there are hives all over her body!

A. Your pet is having an allergic reaction to one or more of the vaccines given. This is an emergency and you should call us right away. We will instruct you to give Benedryl (or the generic Diphenhydramine) and in what quantity based upon the size of your pet. You will have to watch your pet carefully over the next 12-24 hours, but it is rare that you will need to go to an emergency clinic. Note that dogs and cats rarely have a reaction to the first or second vaccine that they are given – it takes time for them to develop the sensitivity. So, if this is the first time that they have a reaction, your pet will continue to have reactions every time he/she is vaccinated from here on. You should tell your regular vet about this BEFORE the next set of booster vaccines are due.

Q. My pet has a firm lump under the incision.

A. This is likely due to too much exercise. Your pet's body is trying to heal the incision, but if your pet is not kept quiet, a lump will form. This is OK so long as it is a fairly firm and symmetrical "knot" under the incision. It will go away with time, but depending upon how many days have passed since surgery, it may actually get larger before it gets smaller. An irregular lump that changes shape and size could indicate a "hernia". A hernia is the result of the stitches in the body wall layer having been broken – this results in a hole in the body wall that allows abdominal contents to go in and out – thus the change of shape/size. This is very rare. If we do make a diagnosis of a hernia, your pet will have to undergo another surgery to correct that, and we will be starting all over with exercise restriction, etc.

Q. The incision is open and I see white material – is this an infection?

A. Your pet has 3 layers of stitches that are all under the skin where you cannot see them. The incision has been sealed with surgical glue. If the incision is coming open (the two sides are parting), then it is likely that your pet has been licking the incision and the surgical glue has parted. The white glistening material you are seeing is most likely just the fatty tissue on the underside of the skin. It is imperative that your pet not lick the incision AT ALL. Not even for a few minutes! If you have a male dog, you should use an e-collar (lampshade) to keep him from licking. If you have a female dog, you can try



putting a T-shirt on her (or a onesy for a small dog), tying it up over the back so that she does not trip over it. Of course, you can also use an e-collar. For cats, you can try a Chihuahua sized T-shirt, or take a large sock and cut the toe off so that you have a tube. Then make two “arm holes” and put that on her like a sweater. You can use the sleeve of a long sleeved T-shirt to get the same results. We guarantee that there will be a lot of drama associated with any of these steps, but it is not forever, and it is in your pet’s best interest. So please hang in there!

Q. My pet has been vomiting. When should I start to worry?

Many pets (like people) can be nauseous from the anesthesia. Add to that that many have had vaccinations as well. If they vomit on the night of surgery, that is not a big deal. One or two times vomiting the day after surgery is OK. But, we do want them to show some interest in eating on the day after surgery – light meals are preferred, and they should not be expected to eat a normal amount. If your pet is not eating, is vomiting bile, cannot keep water down, or vomits more than 4-5 times, you should call us.

Q. My pet has not been drinking much. What should I do?

A. Decreased water intake in the first few days following surgery can be normal. Your pet should be resting, so they will not develop much thirst. So, not drinking can be OK. However, if your pet wants the water and they cannot keep it down (they vomit it up), you need to call us – that is when we will be concerned about dehydration.

Q. My pet had surgery today and now he/she is foaming at the mouth! Is this a seizure?

A. No. There are usually 2 excuses for this scary looking behavior – one is that your pet had an application of Frontline while on board the hospital, and has licked it, getting a bad taste in the mouth resulting in the foaming or drooling. The second is that when you gave your pet the pain medicine, they bit down on the bitter tasting pill and that is why they are foaming! This tends to be seen more in cats since they are the drama kids!

Q. I think my pet is constipated. What should I do?

Oftentimes, a dog or cat either will not attempt to defecate, or will appear to strain when defecating. Remember that your pet has been fasted prior to surgery, so there is little in their system to make them feel the urge to go. Additionally, anesthesia can slow down the GI system. Finally, some pets don’t want to try to go since bearing down and using muscles that have been cut (especially female animals) will be painful. Don’t worry about this. Your pet will go when they finally need to go. But, the stool may look different – it may be mucus covered, or may have a little blood in it. That is OK but it should go back to normal within a few days.



Q. Why does my male cat have a shaved area on his belly?

All pets are tattooed when spayed or neutered. This is to signify that this pet was sterilized. If your pet is ever re-homed, it will signal to the new owner or vet, that the pet is already sterilized. Many people confuse neutered male cats with female cats. So, we put the tattoo on the belly so that if they do attempt to spay the already neutered male cat, once they shave the belly, the tattoo will give it away. The tattoo is nothing more than a nic in the skin made with our scalpel blade. Green ink is placed in the nic and then the nic is sealed with surgical glue. A tattoo gun, like that used with humans, is not used, so initially, the area looks different from a tattoo that a human would have.

Q. My male dog's scrotal sac is swollen and it looks like he was not neutered.

This is not uncommon. The testicles are not free-floating in the scrotal sac. They are adhered to the wall of the sac. So, when they are removed, there is some tearing of tissue. This will cause minor bleeding into the now empty sac. It can swell a bit, but if your dog does not stay quiet in the days following surgery, it may swell a lot. Eventually, the swelling will subside, and even the sac itself will shrink up.

Q. My male dog's surgical area is red and inflamed.

Your dog is likely licking. He must wear the e-collar 24/7 for about 7-10 days. Either the collar is being left off to where he is able to lick (even 2 minutes will do harm), or he is getting around the e-collar. The collar must be big enough to go the length of the nose, and then several more inches to account for the length of the tongue. Other than licking, there are few other reasons that will cause the area to be red and irritated. Some dogs do drag themselves on carpets and such, but licking is usually the culprit.