



PET CARE AFTER ABDOMINAL SURGERY

Where Should I Keep My Pet?

You should keep your pet in a clean, warm, dry Environment-- indoors allowing them outside only to "go to the bathroom." Dirt or filth can infect the incision very quickly, so the surgery site should be closely monitored—it should remain dry. Slight swelling is part of the healing process, but if the incision swells a lot, is angry red, or has pus or other drainage, you should call us. Clean towels make good bedding because they can be laundered easily if they become soiled. Place food and water close-by.

What About Food and Water?

After surgery in the abdomen, some pets will be eager to be home and eat their usual meals. You should not allow this. Some animals will not feel like eating much of anything for several days too. It will vary from patient to patient. Initially, go slow with both food and water until you are sure there is no vomiting. Give small amounts at frequent intervals (5-6 times daily). A small dog or cat should have a tablespoon or two of water every 30-60 minutes. Food likewise should be limited. Larger pets can have a quarter of a cup or more. Small frequent meals are especially important if your pet had stomach or intestinal surgery; a large meal could cause leakage at the intestinal incision.

Some types of surgery may require special foods. Your doctor will advise you if this is needed. It is often a good idea to feed a bland food for the first few days. This can be the prescription diet I/d or you may make a home diet (1/4 hamburger or chicken and 3/4 rice). Any moist food has to be stored in the refrigerator, but may be lightly warmed before feeding. After 3-7 days, you may gradually add the regular food until your pet is back on it completely, and after a week your pet should be able to eat its usual amounts.

My Pet Hasn't Passed Urine or Stool!

Some pets may be reluctant to urinate or defecate due to discomfort. If this is the case, the medicine for pain will be helpful and the discomfort will pass with time. Many of the effective pain medications we use in the hospital have the side-effect of slowing the movement of the intestines causing what is called a paralytic ileus. Like pain, this also passes with time. First the pet will pass gas as the intestines begin moving, and

finally a firm stool is passed. Then your pet will become more normal in its bowel movements. This may take three or four days. Occasionally a pet will need an enema to help at first. If your pet seems uncomfortable and is trying to pass stool but nothing is coming, please call us, and we can advise you on the best course to take. If trying to urinate but can't, you should call us. We'll likely need to examine your pet.

My Pet Seems Uncomfortable!

Naturally there is some discomfort associated with surgery. Rest, time, and healing will alleviate this. In the meantime we will often send medicine home with the pet to help in the first few days. Please give this according to the directions. Do not give more than on the label. If it does not seem adequate, call us. You may not need to use all that is dispensed—some pets heal faster than others. Leftover pain medicine should be discarded once your pet is feeling good. Even major surgery rarely requires more than a week or two of pain medicine.

My Pet is Inactive and Just Lies Still. Is This OK?

If we could wish your pet to be an ideal patient, we would have it go home and rest. And then rest some more. And finally rest a little more. Resting is an important part of healing. Some movement, like to relieve itself is great, but generally, a pet that rests well, heals well.

How Can I Tell if My Pet is Comfortable?

A comfortable animal will tend to lie still. An uncomfortable one will act like it can't get into a comfortable position, and will shift frequently and even get up and move to new positions often. Other signs of discomfort include vocalization (whining or crying), a tight, furrowed forehead, inability to sleep, growling or snapping if touched, attempting to hold the abdomen rigid, and avoiding lying with any pressure on the incision or on the abdomen. As long as it is showing any of these signs, it still needs pain relief medicine. If you are giving the medicine, and it is showing these signs in spite of the medicine, it may need additional medicine or a different dose of the current medicine. So, call us if it seems to be in pain. Studies have shown that surgery heals quickest when the pet is not unduly stressed because of pain.