



GULF COAST
VETERINARY
SPECIALISTS

Frequently Asked Questions After Your Pet Goes Home

There are times when questions arise after your pet is discharged from the hospital. Please contact our office for further information regarding any of your concerns. Some frequently asked questions are answered below.

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In The Event Of An After Hours Emergency

Our normal business hours are 8 AM to 6 PM Monday through Friday, and 8 AM to 2 PM on Saturday. We are closed on Sundays. In case of an aftercare emergency, please call either your veterinarian or the Emergency Clinic in the Gulf Coast Veterinary Specialists building. The Emergency Clinic phone number is **713-693-1100**.

You may come to the Emergency Clinic, or you may ask the Emergency Clinic staff to call our ICU staff on duty. Our ICU staff will in turn notify our doctor on call. You should receive a call from us shortly after our ICU staff is notified. Please deactivate blocked call rejection to ensure we are able to return your call. In many instances this is done by dialing *87.

Crying/Whining

Although vocalizing can indicate discomfort, it is not necessarily a sign of pain. Most often, it is due to excitement, anxiety, and agitation that your pet may feel upon leaving the hospital and returning to the familiar home environment.

Whining is common due to frustration or anxiety after spinal surgery in patients that can not walk. In patients that can not walk, agitation may indicate a full bladder. Take your pet outdoors or to a litter box so they can relieve themselves. If this does not work, contact our office for further advice.

If vocalizing occurs briefly and is mild and intermittent, please monitor the situation. If this does not work, contact our office for further advice.

Shaking/Trembling

This is a very common response to stress after surgery, or other health abnormality. The amount of shaking or trembling may be dramatic, but it does not necessarily imply pain, cold or distress. It may involve the entire body, or just the area of surgery. It is most noticeable in the first 5 days post-operatively, and typically subsides in 1-2 weeks.

Panting

This is commonly seen after surgery. It may indicate soreness but is often due to anxiety.

Pets that have had spinal surgery and can not move may be frustrated or anxious and will often pant. Please contact our office and we can help determine whether additional pain medication is necessary. If your pet has been sent home with a Fentanyl patch, this patch occasionally has side effects, including panting. We will be happy to check your pet, for your peace of mind.

Pain

Despite the medications we have prescribed, some pets will still show signs of pain at home. Restlessness, inability to sleep, poor appetite, lameness or tenderness at the site of surgery are all potential symptoms of pain. If necessary, please confine your pet to limit their activity and contact our office for additional recommendations to keep your pet comfortable.

Incision Care

Do not clean the incision directly, apply hydrogen peroxide or apply any ointments unless your post-operative instruction letter advises to do so.

A mild amount of swelling is expected around the incision. However, if there is a discharge, progressive swelling, increasing redness, signs of discomfort, or if your pet has chewed out any sutures, contact our office.

If your pet is licking or chewing at the incision, an Elizabethan collar (E-collar) should be obtained immediately, and kept on 24 hours a day until the sutures are removed (see ELIZABETHAN COLLAR below).

We want to evaluate your pet if you are concerned about the incision.

Elizabethan Collar (If Necessary)

We are relying on you to keep the Elizabethan Collar on your pet at all times. While your pet may be unhappy with it initially, it is better than having to come back to our office for a recheck visit to repair an incision that has been chewed open. Most pets become accustomed to the collar within one or two days. They can eat, sleep, and drink with it on. We are counting on you. Please keep the Elizabethan collar on your pet if it is recommended.

Bathing

Do not bathe your pet until after the sutures have been removed. It is sometimes better to

wait two days after suture removal to allow the tissue to completely heal. Do not bathe your pet until all bandages, splints, or casts have been removed. Until then, a wipe-down with a damp towel is a safe alternative, if the incision has become soiled. If your pet requires medicated baths, please contact your veterinarian to discuss if alternative options are necessary during this time period.

Swelling

Some swelling around the incision is expected post-operatively. It will gradually resolve. If the swelling is increasing, the area is red, inflamed, painful, or producing discharge, contact our office and we will examine your pet.

It is not uncommon to have mild swelling of the foot distal to where the intravenous catheter was placed. You may remove the gauze and tape where the catheter was removed on the evening that your pet goes home, if it was not removed prior to leaving the hospital.

Generalized swelling of the lower limb beyond the incision near the foot is sometimes present after surgery. You may gently massage the area, working from the foot upwards, but the leg may be sore. It is often better to simply leave the area alone unless instructed to do otherwise. See your discharge summary for detailed aftercare information.

A persistent tissue irregularity or small lump may be persistent for weeks or months after surgery near or under the incision. These irregular areas will gradually resolve. If the lump becomes large, please contact our office.

Confinement/Limited Activity

Your post-operative report will advise one of the following types of activity that is recommended:

- A. Cage rest - confinement to a cage, exercise pen or large traveling carrier, at all times. Dogs may be taken outdoors on a leash or carried out to relieve themselves, but no other activities are permitted.
- B. Strict confinement - confinement to one or two rooms with no jumping.
- C. Limited activity - leash walks of no more than five minutes, several times a day for elimination breaks only and confinement to one level of the home with no use of the stairs.

- D. No heavy exercise - normal leash walks are permitted but no running, roughhousing, jumping, chasing, or visits to the dog park. Climbing stairs and jumping on low objects should be minimal.
- E. Normal activity - no restrictions at all.

Injury to Surgical Site

If for any reason you suspect that your pet has re-injured the surgical site, contact our office for advice.

Bandage, Cast or Splint Care

If the bandage becomes soiled, damp, chewed, or has "slipped" please do not re-bandage at home. Duct tape and other plastic items can trap moisture within the cast/bandage causing inflammation of the skin and tissues. In some cases, bandages inappropriately applied at home can even cut off the circulation to the foot. If problems arise, keep your pet under close observation until you can contact our office and we can advise you whether or not the bandage or splint needs to be replaced.

After a cast or splint is removed, it may take 5-10 days for your pet to become comfortable to use the leg without the splint. Do not be alarmed if your pet seems to be limping or not using the leg normally immediately after the splint has been removed.

Implant or Hardware is Visible/Exposed

If implants are damaged, exposed or chewed on, please immediately keep your pet under constant observation and contact our office. We will schedule you to come in so the doctor can evaluate the area.

Diet

Unless your post-operative letter advises otherwise, feed a normal diet after surgery. If the appetite is poor, see "APPETITE" below.

Appetite**

A decreased appetite is not unusual during an illness, after anesthesia, or after surgery. There are several things you can try to increase your pet's appetite.

- A. Offer favorite foods and treats.
- B. Warm the food slightly (just over room temperature) to increase the smell and taste.

- C. Offer chicken baby food, alone or mixed with the regular pet food.
- D. Offer low sodium chicken/beef broth alone or with regular pet food.

** These diet suggestions are only for patients that are not on a restricted diet.

Urination

Some pets may urinate more or less frequently after surgery, or may seem unable to control urination. This is usually temporary. Contact our office immediately if any blood is noted in the urine, if straining to urinate is noted, or if no urine is noted for more than 18-24 hours. Many pets initially drink less after returning home, so expect less urination. Some pets may drink more for the first few days as some medications may cause your pet to drink and urinate more frequently.

Vomiting

Occasional vomiting is not unusual after surgery and anesthesia. If vomiting continues, if blood is noted in the vomitus, or if your pet is not holding down any food or water, please contact our office immediately.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea may occur when your pet is away from home. There are many potential causes, but it is often due to stress. In some patients, medications may also cause diarrhea. We do not recommend using over-the-counter medication to treat diarrhea without instruction.

Constipation/Bowel Movements

Difficulty having bowel movements and occasional constipation can occur after illness, anesthesia or surgery. Diarrhea is more common than constipation. It may take a few days for the gastrointestinal system to return to normal function. Fortunately for dogs and cats it is not vital to pass stool on a regular daily basis.

You may give a small amount of vegetable or olive oil mixed in each meal (one-half teaspoon for a cat and up to 3 teaspoons for a big dog). If this does not result in a stool within 48 hours, please contact our office. Canned pumpkin without spice is a good natural option to prevent constipation and can be purchased at the grocery store. You can give the same amounts as the vegetable and olive oil described above.

Medications

What time did my pet receive medications in the hospital on the day of release?

- Once a day dosing of medication will be specified upon release.
- Twice a day medications are given at 8 AM and 8 PM.
- Three times a day medications are given at 8 AM, 4 PM, and midnight.
- Four times a day medications are given at 8 AM, 2 PM, 8 PM and 2 AM.

At home, you may give the first dose as soon as you get up in the morning and the last dose just before bedtime.

It is a good idea to give the medications with a meal to avoid stomach upset unless specifically instructed to give the medication on an empty stomach.

How do I give medications?

The pill can be placed over the base of the tongue and it will be swallowed. If that does not work, try to place the medication in a piece of cheese, turkey hotdog, pill pocket, peanut butter, chicken or any other treat your pet likes (use just enough to give your pet the medication).

Medication Refills

If you have used all of the pain medication and you feel your pet still has discomfort, contact our office. We will be happy to discuss dispensing a refill of the pain medication.

Unfortunately, we cannot refill medications prescribed by your primary care veterinarian without a prescription. Please contact their office for this service if they were the first to dispense the medication.

For surgical patients, we will dispense medication for the immediate post-operative period. Long-term medications should be obtained from your primary veterinarian.

Seroma (Fluid Pocket)

In any healing surgical area, fluid produced during the healing process may accumulate and form a seroma (fluid pocket). The body will reabsorb the fluid if the seroma is small. If you notice a seroma developing, contact our office. We may wish to recheck the area.

Spinal Surgery

Please refer to the "Discharge Instructions" which you received from your Neurologist.

Our Specialists

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*We combine Science, Technology, and
Compassion to provide exceptional care for
you and your pet.*

