

Surgery: What to Expect for your Pet

Whether your pet is coming in for a wellness surgery like a spay, neuter, or dental, or a longer procedure like a lump removal or ACL surgery, all of our patients receive the same level of medical care when undergoing any anesthetic procedure. So, what should you and your pet expect before all anesthetic procedures?

Scheduling

All anesthetic procedures are scheduled at least 24 hours in advance unless it is an emergency. This allows us to take all necessary precautions and make all preparations before your pet arrives for surgery. You can make your pet's appointment either in-person at our hospital, over the phone via call or text, in our app, or online via the Pet Portal. In the event your pet needs to be seen by a doctor before a surgery or anesthetic procedure is done the customer service representative (CSR) or veterinary assistant will let you know.

Pre-Op At-Home Care

The night before your pet's anesthetic procedure or surgery withhold all food after 12:00 a.m.; however, you can leave water out through the morning before leaving the house. Your pet can have a small amount of water but do not allow them to drink a large amount prior to coming in. Give any medications as prescribed before the procedure, but do not give any medications the morning of (unless otherwise instructed), as we give everything as injectables during the procedure/ surgery.

Check-in the Morning of Surgery

When you arrive at our hospital you may leave your pet in the car while you fill out paperwork or you may bring them in with you where they will be escorted for a weight check and then into their private kennel. We ask that you walk your dog thoroughly before bringing them into the building. *We recommend filling out your paperwork online prior to drop-off to make check-in quicker.*

At check-in you will fill out a few forms (if you haven't yet done so online prior to drop off): an anesthesia release, a procedure check-in form, and a blood work release form. The admitting CSR or surgery nurse will answer any questions you have at this time and go over the paperwork with you.



Your Pet's Stay

After drop-off your pet is placed in a private kennel with bedding. Your pet does not share this space with any other patients. Any pre-surgery tasks will be completed at this time, such as lab work before anesthesia. After all pre-anesthetic labs are completed the doctor does a final pre-surgery exam and gives your pet his or her pre-surgery sedation. Once given, cats are placed back in their kennels and dogs are taken for a walk before going into their kennels.

After sedation is given your pet will wait 15 to 20 minutes for the drugs to take effect.

The Procedure

Length of surgical procedures vary depending on complication and difficulty. You can expect your pet to be under anesthesia for 20 to 40 minutes for a neuter or spay. Non-wellness procedures vary in length. The doctor or surgery nurse can give you a more accurate estimate during your pet's initial exam or at surgery check-in.

All pets in the hospital that are present for surgery are pre-medicated (sedated) then induced with propofol via IV and placed on oxygen and isoflurane for the duration of the procedure. A nurse monitors the patient closely while the doctor performs the procedure. Most pets, especially those that are 7 years of age or older, will also be placed on an IV with fluids for the duration of the procedure and recovery. This allows anesthesia to flush from your pet's system more quickly, maintains proper hydration, and provides easy access to a vein in case of an emergency.

Post-Op Care in the Hospital

After surgery, each patient is moved to a private area in the treatment room of the hospital where a nurse and patient care technician can monitor them closely while they wake up. All patients are placed on special mats that reflect body heat as well as wrapped in blankets. Keeping your pet's body temperature up while in recovery allows them to wake up safely and comfortably. They are monitored in this way until they are sitting up on their own. At that time they are transferred back to their own kennel where we monitor them until they can walk. Once a patient is walking without assistance they are free to go home.

There are only a few surgeries we keep overnight regardless of the patient's status: ear hematoma repair, and all orthopedic procedures. With these procedures we must check the patient the next morning for bleeding and they are kept on extra pain medications through the night which keeps them from walking on their own in some cases.



Discharge & Check-Out

We ask that all clients schedule a discharge appointment before surgery or at check-in the morning of. This allows us to block out a time just for you and your pet, where the manager, surgery nurse, or doctor can focus on your pet's at-home care instructions. We can also answer any questions you have at that time, go over treatments, and explain any and all medications your pet will be taking after surgery.

We also have the option of checking you out in the exam room and discussing the bill in private in case you have any questions regarding the care your pet received. If you would like to pay your bill from the exam room please notify the practice manager or other staff member. We can also send you a payment link via text for you to pay prior to picking up your pet.

At-Home Care Post-Op

All at home care will be discussed at your discharge appointment. Please be aware, however, that any procedure that requires sutures will also require your pet to stay rested, quiet, and walked only on a leash (dogs only), until the sutures are removed. No jumping on furniture, no stairs, no playing or rough-housing, etc.

The first night after surgery your pet should stay in a dark, quiet room away from other pets and children. You may offer your pet water as long as they are not vomiting. If they are hungry they may have $\frac{1}{3}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ of their normal meal. If they have any vomiting, take away all food and water until the next morning.

If your pet is sent home with any medications please remember that 99% of the time they will not start taking them until the next day. A nurse or doctor will discuss the specifics of your pet's medications at the discharge appointment.

If your pet has had a dental cleaning they only need to be kept quiet and confined for one evening and should be able to resume normal activity the next day. In some cases after a dental procedure you must soften your pet's dry kibble or only offer wet food for a few days. Again, a nurse will let you know during the discharge appointment what is appropriate.

Suture Removal & Post-Op Recheck

If your pet had a procedure where non-dissolvable sutures were used he or she will need to return 10 to 14 days later to have them removed.

Do not let your pet lick or chew at sutures or surgery site. You may be sent home with an Elizabethan collar if we suspect your pet will need it. We also have Kong Cloud Collars available if you feel your pet will be unable to wear a traditional e-collar.

We like to see all anesthetic procedures back for a recheck (at no charge) 14 days after the procedure to see how they are doing and answer any additional questions you may have.

Call us anytime with questions or concerns! We are here to answer any questions you may have regarding your pet's anesthetic procedure.