



## **After Surgery Care Instructions**

*Thank you for having your pet spayed or neutered by the APF Community Spay/Neuter clinic. The APF is an independent nonprofit organization that receives no government funding. It is only through community support and donations that we are able to provide this service.*

Your pet had major surgery with general anesthesia and pain medications and will need to be cared for afterwards to help avoid complications. Following the instructions below will help ensure your pet has a successful recovery. Animals may be groggy or sleepy from the anesthesia. Your pet may be a little agitated or aggressive due to the after-effects of anesthesia. Avoid handling the animal too much as he/she may try to bite or scratch you. Your pet should be isolated from children and other pets. Your pet may also have poor balance; this will make getting out of the car and climbing stairs more difficult.

- **Limit Activity:** We strongly recommend you keep your pet confined in a crate or small room the night after surgery. Keep your pet confined to a warm, quiet environment and separate from other pets and young children for the first 12 hours. No running, jumping, playing, rough housing, bathing or swimming or strenuous activity for 7 to 10 days following surgery. When outdoors, dogs should be kept on a short leash. Please keep cats indoors for 7 days.
- **Feeding:** Anesthesia tends to make animals experience nausea, so your pet may not want to eat when he/she gets home after surgery. Re-introduce food slowly. For adult animals offer ½ the normal amount of food and water when your pet is fully awake. If vomiting occurs, wait until the next day to give more food. Do not change your pet's diet at this time and do not offer table foods. Your pet's appetite should return gradually within 24 hours of surgery.
- **Under 4 months of age:** Animals under 4 months of age should eat right away and may receive the normal amount of food and water.
- **Incision Site:** What you see on the day of surgery is what we consider normal. It is important that the incision site should be checked twice daily. Check for excessive redness, swelling, discharge, blood or opening of the incision site. A very small amount of redness/swelling at incision may occur. Do not clean or apply any topical ointment to the incision site as this may cause the surgical glue to dissolve too quickly. It is important to keep your pet from licking or biting at the incision site as this could cause the wound to reopen and become infected. **If your pet is licking, we strongly recommend you purchase an E-collar.**
- **E-Collars:** E-Collars/cones are strongly recommended for pets after surgery to prevent them from licking at the incision site. We recommend they wear them for 5-7 days. Most pets can still eat, drink, and sleep with them on comfortably.



- **Female dogs and cats** will have a mid-line incision to their abdomen where the uterus and ovaries were removed. This incision is sealed with internal sutures that will dissolve. Surgical glue may have also been applied to the skin to seal the incision against bacteria.
- **Male dogs** have an incision just above the scrotum. The scrotum is not removed, only the testicles.
- **Male cats** have 1-2 incisions, one on each side of the scrotum. The scrotum is not removed, only the testicles. Male cats may appear as if they still have testicles. This is normal; the swelling should subside gradually through the recovery period. Male cats do not have any sutures.
- **Tattoo:** All female cats & female dogs receive a **small green tattoo** near the incision site; male dogs receive a small green tattoo in the groin area and male cats near or on their umbilicus. This is universally recognized tattoo that identifies your pet has been spayed or neutered.
- **DO NOT GIVE:** Aspirin, Advil, Tylenol or any human medications to your pet for pain relief. *These medications can be deadly.*
- **HOW TO RECOGNIZE PAIN IN YOUR PET**

Our veterinarian administers several different pain medications before, during and after surgery. If your pet appears to be in pain after surgery call us in a timely manner.

Signs of pain include:

Restlessness	Hunched over
Panting	Unable to get comfortable
Not eating	(same night of surgery excluded)

You may need to contact your regular veterinarian. If you do not have one, please call us. We recommend that your animal receive a post-operative examination with your regular veterinarian 7-10 days after surgery. Please have the incision checked for complete healing and discuss additional needs, follow –up care, and booster vaccines.

- **Complications:** Spaying and neutering are both very safe surgeries; however, with all surgery, complications can occur. Minimal redness and swelling should resolve within several days, but if they persist longer, please contact us. You should also contact us immediately if you notice any of the following:

Pale Gums	Discharge or bleeding from the incision
Depression	Difficulty urinating
Vomiting	Labored breathing
Diarrhea	



The APF will treat at our clinic, at minimal cost, any post-operative complications resulting directly from the surgery, if the above post-operative instructions have been followed in full. Your regular veterinarian must address illnesses or injuries that are not a direct result of surgery. We cannot be held responsible for complications resulting from failure to follow post-operative instructions or from contagious diseases for which the animal was not previously properly vaccinated.

**In-heat females need to be kept away from males.** If your female dog or cat was in heat at the time of surgery, you must keep her away from unneutered males for at least two weeks. While she is now unable to become pregnant, she will still attract intact males for a short period of time. If a male dog attempts to breed a female at this point, it can cause serious, possibly life-threatening damage.

### **MEDICAL CONCERNS**

Our medical concerns email is [medical@animalprotective.org](mailto:medical@animalprotective.org)

Please be advised that **we only monitor phone calls and emails during our regular business hours** (Monday through Thursday, 8am to 5pm), although you may submit your concerns at any time.

**If your pet has a medical concern or emergency when we are closed** (including but not limited to: lethargy, lack of appetite, incision opening up, GI upset), please contact your regular veterinarian or the Capital District Veterinary Referral Hospital at 518-785-1094. Any services rendered by outside veterinarians will not be covered by the APF.

If you are concerned about your pet's recovery following surgery, we can schedule a free recheck for you with our veterinarian during our regular business hours. Rechecks will only be provided for surgery related ailments. Any ailment not relating to surgery or ailments that are self-inflicted (caused by excessive activity, licking incision, etc.) are at the owner's expense.



### **A LUMP FORMED NEAR MY PET'S INCISION, WHAT IS IT?**

It is quite common for a lump to form near the site of an abdominal surgery incision. Most commonly this is something known as a seroma. A seroma is a fluid filled lump that can vary in size from the size of a grape in many small dogs and cats, to up to a baseball in large dogs.

A seroma occurs after a surgery has been done. The body planes (in this case the abdominal wall and the skin layers) have been separated and the body doesn't like empty or dead space so it tries to 'fill it in' by adding fluid. The result is a collection of fluid between the layers of skin and muscle. It should be 'quiet' or non-painful, soft fluid, without heat or other signs of infection associated with it.

In rare cases a break in sutures in the abdominal muscle can occur, and a hernia can occur. This is much less common than a seroma, but see section on "When Should I Worry?" for more.

### **WHAT'S THE TREATMENT FOR A SEROMA?**

In most cases, the treatment of choice for a seroma is to just leave it alone. The body will slowly resorb the fluid and it will eventually shrink until it looks like it was never there to begin with. It is in essence a cosmetic lesion until this happens, and typically is not painful for your pet. This resolution of the seroma often takes 7-10 days, though large seromas can take weeks to fully resolve and should be monitored for infection during this time.

### **WHY DON'T YOU JUST DRAIN THE FLUID?**

Draining the fluid can reduce the size of the seroma in the short term, but typically they will fill back up within a few hours. One major drawback to placing a physical drain in to keep the fluid flowing out is that they can allow bacteria to crawl and seep into the space and cause infection.

### **WHEN SHOULD I WORRY?**

If the bump is notably painful, excessively hot, red, or the incision is open and oozing at all, then you should contact the APF spay/neuter clinic or your veterinarian, as there could be concern for infection. If the bump completely goes away (back into the abdomen) with gentle pressure or accompanied by vomiting or pain, then it is possible that a hernia (hole in the abdominal muscle layer) has occurred and you should call APF or your veterinarian.

If your pet is acting completely normal and is not painful, there is typically less cause for concern.

### **CAN ANYTHING BE DONE TO PREVENT A SEROMA OR SPEED UP RESOLUTION OF A SEROMA?**

The best prevention for a seroma is keeping your pet's activity restricted for about 10 days post-op. The more an animal moves around, the more likely it is for a seroma to form. As always, it is important to prevent your pet from licking or chewing their incision.

While seromas need time for the body to resolve them, it is best to keep your animal calm and activity restricted until the seroma completely resolves.