

Post-Operative Care



Your dog has just undergone surgery. While welcoming him home, there are some things to remember to assure a speedy recovery.

Anesthesia Your dog may not feel himself for the next 12 to 24 hours. Keep him in a warm, quiet area, away from other pets, where he can rest and is not likely to injure himself. An airline kennel or a small room is ideal.

Never feed or give water to a dog that still seems groggy. Once your dog seems awake and alert, take things slow. Some anesthetics can cause nausea. Introduce water first. If all goes well, a small amount of food can be offered a few hours later. Wait until tomorrow to return to his normal feeding schedule.

Exercise Your dog should be kept quiet today. During the next week, his exercise should be restricted moderately. Short leash walks are OK unless your veterinarian advises otherwise. Discourage vigorous running, jumping, or rough play. Avoid leaving him unattended with other pets with whom he normally rough-houses. Excessive exercise after surgery can cause swelling and delayed healing.

Some surgeries require more severe restriction or specific types of exercise. Be sure you understand your veterinarians instructions, and follow them diligently.

Environment and Grooming Keep your dog in a warm place today and tonight, preferably indoors. Make sure his bedding and the area where he lives are especially clean and dry.

Because the incision should stay dry, do not bathe your dog or allow him to swim for at least one week. If the area around his incision appears soiled, you can carefully wipe his skin with warm water and a mild antiseptic soap, then rinse by wiping with plain water. Avoid getting soap or water directly on the incision.

Self-Trauma A surgical incision may feel sore, itchy, or just different to your dog. His natural instinct is to lick, scratch or chew. If you notice him bothering his incision, ask your veterinarian if he might need an Elizabethan collar. The Elizabethan collar should be worn at all times when you are not watching him, its amazing how quickly a dog can pull out a stitch when you turn your back.

Monitoring Check your dogs incision daily. Notify your veterinarian if you see any increase in swelling, discharge, bleeding, redness, or if you think stitches might be missing.

If your dog has a cast or bandage, check it daily to be sure its dry, clean, and has no foul odor. Bandages can be kept clean and dry during trips outdoors by putting a plastic bag over the limb and taping it in place.

Medications If your dog has medication, thoroughly read and follow all label instructions. If you have any questions, your veterinary office can help. Always use the medication for the full duration prescribed, even if your dog seems better sooner.

Getting Help Never hesitate to call your veterinarian or local emergency veterinary clinic if you think your dog may be having a problem. Your diligence may catch a complication before it becomes serious.