



Spay/Neuter Post-Operative Guide

Thank you for trusting Seattle Humane with your pet's surgery. Should your pet need it, Seattle Humane Veterinary Services team offers medical care if issues arise related to your pet's spay/neuter operation.

- Our veterinary reception team operates Tuesday through Saturday, 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
- The medical center operates by appointment only (associated fees apply).
- If there are concerns about your pet following surgery, send an email describing your concerns along with pictures, if appropriate. Or leave a detailed voice message including your name and your pet's name.
- If urgent concerns such as extreme lethargy, profuse vomiting and/or diarrhea, significant bleeding or tissue protruding from an incision are noted outside of our operating hours, or you are unable to get a hold of us, we recommend that you contact your family veterinarian or an [emergency veterinary clinic](#).
- Seattle Humane is unable to provide financial reimbursement for costs associated with veterinary services obtained at outside clinics.
- Seattle Humane offers preventative wellness care (vaccines, dewormers, flea/tick/heartworm prevention, etc.) to income-qualified pet owners through our [Community Medicine program](#).

Seattle Humane Veterinary Services Contact information:

Schuler Family Medical Center

Phone: 425-649-7560

Email: vets@seattlehumane.org

Post-Operative Instructions

1. If your pet had surgery earlier today, feed a small meal this evening.
2. Incision(s) may look "rippled" due to a layer of stitches underneath the skin.
3. Check the incision(s) daily for the first 7-10 days following surgery to monitor healing. We recommend you take a photo of the incision when you get home to reference for any changes.
4. Take care to keep the incision(s) clean and dry. Do not bathe or allow pet to swim for 14 days (about 2 weeks).
5. If present, external sutures or staples likely require removal within 10-14 days (about 2 weeks) following surgery.
6. Monitor your pet's incision(s) for swelling, pain, discharge, bleeding, or substantial bruising; notify Seattle Humane if any concerns are noted.
7. It is important that this pet wear a hard plastic e-collar for 10-14 days (about 2 weeks) following surgery to prevent chewing the incision open and/or causing an infection at the surgery site.
8. Monitor pets for any signs of illness including vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, poor appetite and seek follow up care promptly if noted.

9. **No Strenuous Activity:** This pet should take it easy for the next 10-14 days. Limit dogs' activity to short, leash walks and confine cats to a small space, if possible, during this period of time. Too much activity may cause the incision to open or become swollen.
10. Friendly cats that are indoor/outdoor should stay inside for 10-14 days. Whenever possible, feral cats should stay inside or in an enclosed space for 72 hours.

Additional Spay/Neuter Recovery Information

Spay surgery (ovariohysterectomy) involves making an incision through the skin and muscle into the abdominal cavity, and surgical removal of the internal female reproductive organs (ovaries and uterus).

Neuter surgery (castration) of male animals involves the surgical removal of the testicles through the skin, either through or near the scrotum.

Retained Testicles: In some cases, one or both testicles of male animals are located in an abnormal location (either higher in groin area or inside the abdominal cavity). This condition is referred to as **cryptorchidism** and occurs as a genetic trait. Cryptorchid neuter surgeries will require additional incision(s), dependent upon the location of the testicle(s). Incisions may be located along the groin area or the abdomen.

Female cats and dogs will have sutures buried under the skin, which are not visible. They will dissolve on their own and do not need to be removed. It takes several months for suture material to fully dissolve, and it is not uncommon for one or two small, marble-sized bumps to form under the skin during the first few weeks after surgery. A firm swelling under the skin may grow slightly in size over the first couple of days, but the swelling should not be able to move deep inside of the body if pushed on with your hand.

- Dogs that were in heat at the time of surgery may experience vaginal bleeding that can last for 7-14 days following surgery. Vaginal bleeding that seems exceptionally heavy is not considered normal and should be reported to a veterinarian.

Male cats and male puppies do not require sutures due to the small size and location of the incisions along the scrotum. The scrotum is located under the anus in cats and at the base of the penis (the "groin" area) in puppies. Make sure the surgical area appears to be healing, and not oozing or opening. The scrotum may still appear "full" for a few weeks but should not be hard, red, painful, leaking fluid/blood nor swollen to a much larger size than before surgery.

Male dogs have internal sutures that will dissolve unless stated otherwise. This process takes several months, and it is common for one or two small, marble-sized bumps to form under the skin during the first few weeks after surgery. Some bruising is normal. The scrotum may still appear "full" for a few weeks but should not be hard, red, painful, leaking any fluids nor swollen to a much larger size than before surgery.

All cats and dogs receive a small, green tattoo on the abdomen to indicate sterilization.

Potential Surgery-Related Issues

- **Gastrointestinal upset:** Mild bouts of diarrhea with or without small amounts of blood, vomiting or low appetite are not uncommon side effects from anesthesia or vaccines. If these symptoms do not resolve within a few days or are becoming more severe, please contact Seattle Humane or your family veterinarian.
- **Incisional swelling:** Your pet may develop a lump under the surgical incision, which may be soft or firm. This can be due to too much activity, resulting in fluid pocketing between the layers of tissue that should not be able to be pushed into the abdomen. This is called a seroma, and typically resolves on its own within a few weeks. Limiting your pet's activity will help prevent seromas from occurring and help it resolve more quickly if it does occur.
- **Infected incision:** A small amount of bloody/blood-tinged clear discharge at the incision site can be typical following surgery and should resolve within a few days. Green, yellow, white or cloudy discharge is not normal and could be signs of an infection. Other signs of infection could be an incision that is red, inflamed, and/or warm to the touch. Keeping an e-collar on your pet is vital in preventing an infection. A dry, crusted appearance to the incision is generally normal. If you see signs of an infection, contact Seattle Humane or your family veterinarian.
- **Open incision:** It is possible that an incision may open at the outer layer (the skin) or deeper in the tissue (body wall); this is called dehiscence. Severity of an open incision can vary and depends on where the dehiscence has occurred. A swollen lump under the incision that can be pushed into the abdomen could be a sign of a dehiscence at the body wall and should be addressed as soon as possible with Seattle Humane or your family veterinarian. Similarly, any open or gaping areas along the incision at the skin should be assessed by Seattle Humane or your family veterinarian. Keeping an e-collar on your pet is vital in preventing dehiscence.