



## Home after Surgery and Anesthesia

Your pet has been discharged from HVC today after a surgical or anesthetic procedure. Below is a summary of common questions and concerns. Please contact our office for further information if not addressed during your discharge or in the detailer below.

### After Hours Emergencies

Normal business hours are Monday-Friday from 8am to 6pm, and Saturdays from 7am to 12pm. We are closed Sundays and major holidays. If your pet is experiencing an after-hours emergency, please call any of our surrounding emergency clinics. You can reach us at 713-869-6644.

### Appetite

Decreased appetite is not unusual after anesthesia or surgery. There are several ways to attempt to increase your pet's appetite.

1. Offer favorite foods and treats.
2. Warm the food to enhance the smell and taste.
3. Offer chicken baby food, alone or mixed with regular pet food.

### Bandage, Cast, or Splint Care

If your pet has a bandage and it becomes soiled, wet (even damp), chewed, has an odor, or has "slipped", please do not remove the bandage at home or attempt to rebandage. Bandages that are improperly applied at home can inadvertently cut off or impede circulation to the limb. If you have concerns about your pet's bandage or cast, keep your pet under close observation until you can contact our office.

### Bathing

Please do not bathe your pet until after the sutures have been removed, or until instructed by your surgeon. Your pet should not be bathed until all bandages, splints or casts have been removed. If you are concerned the incision has been soiled, please contact HVC for further instruction.

### Confinement / Limited Activity

Your post-operative instructions will recommend one of the following types of activity restrictions for your pet:

- Cage rest/Strict Confinement: Patients who need cage rest should be confined to a kennel, exercise pen, or approved traveling carrier at all times. Dogs may be taken out on leash or carried out to relieve themselves, but no other activities are permitted.
- Limited activity: Patients may be taken on short leash walks several times a day for elimination. They should be

confined to a specific room, and no jumping, running, or stairs should be permitted.

- Normal activity: No restrictions.

\*Please note that your pet's activity restriction instructions are in place to give your pet the best possible outcome post-operatively. Failure to comply with post-operative activity restriction instructions may result in serious complication or necessitate additional surgery.

### Constipation / Bowel Movements

Constipation can occur after illness, anesthesia or surgery. Some patients need a few days for their gastrointestinal system to return to normal. Even pets who have a "regular" schedule for bowel movements and are eating normally may experience a delay before having a bowel movement post-operatively. If you feel as though your pet is uncomfortable, you may give a small amount (1/2 teaspoon for a cat and up to 3 teaspoons for a big dog) of vegetable or olive oil mixed with your pet's regular food. A small amount of un-spiced canned pumpkin may also be given to your pet to help with constipation (same amount as outlined above). If no bowel movement is noted within 48-72 hours of administration, please contact our office.

### Crying/Whining

Vocalization can indicate discomfort; however, it is not always a sign of pain. More often it is due to excitement, anxiety, or agitation that your pet may feel after leaving HVC and returning to their home environment. If the vocalizing occurs briefly or is mild/intermittent, please monitor the situation. If your pet is vocalizing excessively or seems to otherwise be exhibiting signs of pain or distress, please refer to the section on "Pain".

### Diarrhea

Diarrhea post-operatively can be due to stress or medication. Please contact our office if your pet is experiencing diarrhea. We do NOT recommend over the counter medication without instruction.

### Diet

Unless otherwise instructed at your post-operative discharge, feed your pet their normal diet after surgery. If your pet's appetite is decreased, please refer to "appetite" section.

## Elizabethan Collar

We are relying on you to keep your pet's incision safe and clean. The Elizabethan collar should be kept in place at ALL TIMES. Most pets become accustomed to the collar within a few days and are able to eat, sleep, and drink with it on.

## Incision Care

Please do not clean the incision directly or apply any ointments unless specifically instructed by a HVC staff member. Do not apply hydrogen peroxide to the incision.

If your pet has chewed out any sutures or is licking at the incision area, please obtain an Elizabethan collar and place it on your pet immediately to prevent further trauma to the incision, and contact our office right away. The Elizabethan collar should be kept on 24 hours a day until the sutures are removed or you are otherwise instructed.

## Injury to Surgical Site

If you suspect your pet has re-injured their surgical site for any reason, please contact our office.

## Medications

What time did my pet receive their medications on the day of their discharge? What time should I give their next dose?

- For once a day medication, timing will be specified by your pet's care team. It may also be listed on the prescription label.
- Twice a day medication are given at 8am and 8pm.

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

Generally, it's a good idea to give medication with a meal to avoid stomach upset, unless specifically instructed to give the medication on an empty stomach.

How to give medication: the pill can be placed over the base of the tongue (at the back of the throat) and it will be swallowed. If that does not work, try to place the medication in a piece of food, such as cheese, turkey, hotdog, pill pocket, peanut butter, etc. (unless your pet is on a restricted diet). Using just enough food to give the medication is often helpful, since when pets have to chew prior to swallowing they will sometimes taste the pill and spit it out. This may cause them to be suspicious of the next medication attempt.

## Medication refills

If you have run out of medications for pain control or other medications dispensed related to your pet's surgery, please contact our office. We request a 24-hour notice for all refills. In most cases, post-operative pain medications or other medications prescribed are for short-term use.

## Pain

Despite the medications we have prescribed or administered in the hospital, some patients will still experience some discomfort post-operatively. Restlessness, poor appetite, and lameness or tenderness at the surgical site can all be potential symptoms of pain. If necessary, please confine your pet to limit their activity, and contact our office for additional recommendations.

## Panting

Panting is commonly seen after surgery. It may indicate soreness, but is often due to anxiety or as a side effect of certain medications. In surgeries that necessitate immobility post-operatively, the confinement can cause anxiety and frustration for some patients, which can lead to panting. If your pet is panting excessively post-operatively, please contact our office, so we can determine if your pet needs additional treatment or if an evaluation is necessary.

## Shaking/Trembling

Shaking and trembling is a very common response to stress after surgery, particularly for the first 24-48 hours after returning home. Although it may seem dramatic, it does not necessarily imply pain. Generally, it is noticeable in the first 5 days post-operatively. Shaking and trembling typically subsides within 1-2 weeks.

## Swelling

Some swelling around the incision area is expected post-operatively. This swelling will gradually resolve on its own; it may look the worst 3-5 days post-operatively. If the swelling is increasing, or the incision is red, inflamed, painful, or producing discharge, please contact our office to schedule an examination.

It is not uncommon to see mild swelling of the foot below where the IV catheter was placed. If the gauze and wrapping where the catheter was removed is still in place when your pet is discharged from the hospital, please remove it the evening your pet goes home.

## Urination

Some patients may urinate more/less frequently after surgery or may seem unable to control their urination. This is typically temporary but should be monitored. Contact us immediately if any blood is noted in the urine, or if your pet is straining to urinate. If your pet does not urinate for 24 hours, please contact our office immediately.

## Vomiting

Vomiting sometimes occurs post-operatively, however if the vomiting is frequent, blood is noted in the vomit, or your pet is not able to hold down food or water, contact our office immediately.

Thank you for entrusting us with your pet.