



## Frequently Asked Questions: What to Expect following Your Pet's Surgical Procedure

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- **Question:** My pet has not defecated since I brought them home from surgery, is this normal?
  - **Answer:** Several days without a bowel movement after surgery should not be a cause for alarm. A delay in bowel movements up to 7 days (or longer) have been documented in some pets after surgery. If your pet is eating, that is a good sign because it suggests proper intestinal movement. A diet change can help to encourage bowel movements. The easiest and best way to encourage bowel movements through a diet change is to feed a high-fiber prescription diet specifically designed for this purpose. Fiber may be added to the regular diet in the form of: Canned pumpkin, Bran cereal or Metamucil, Konsyl, Sibilin or similar product. A member of your pet's surgical team can instruct you on how much to add. Watch for signs of straining or pain while trying to defecate. If your pet is straining to defecate, has pain while attempting to defecate or has not defecated > 5-7 days please call us, an emergency veterinarian, or your primary veterinarian if outside of our business hours.
- **Question:** My pet has not urinated since I brought them home from surgery, is this normal?
  - **Answer:** It is not uncommon for your pet to have a delay in urination post-surgery. There are a variety of causes for this including urinary catheter placement, reluctance to posture to urinate, anesthesia medications and other causes. Most orthopedic surgical patients will have a urinary catheter placed while in hospital. The urinary catheter is often removed just prior to discharge from the hospital, and some patients will not have a full bladder until the following day. Please make sure your pet has regular access to water and they are allowed more frequent trips outside for bathroom breaks. Avoid using piddle pads or new areas for potty breaks as these changes to their routine may be contributing to the lack of eliminations. If your pet is straining to urinate, has pain while attempting to urinate or has not urinated >72 hours please call us, an emergency veterinarian, or your primary veterinarian if outside of our business hours.
- **Question:** My pet is trying to lick or scratch its incision or shaved areas, is this ok?
  - **Answer:** No, this is not okay. Licking significantly increases the risk of post-surgical infection. Additionally, licking, chewing or excessive grooming can traumatize the region or induce additional inflammation. An e-collar should be worn at all times to prevent this. Please monitor your pet while they are wearing the E-collar to ensure it is the proper size for your pet and that they are not able to remove the E-collar on their own volition. Placing the loops of the E-collar through your pet's personal collar may prevent the E-collar from being easily removed. Increasing anti-anxiety medication may also help your pet maintain the E-collar. If you need help adjusting your pet's sedative medications, please call our office or refer to your discharge instructions, and/or medication label. Please do not apply topical medications unless instructed to do so by a veterinarian. If the surgical site becomes severely soiled with dirt, urine or feces light cleaning with a moist toilette (baby wipes) is appropriate. .
- **Question:** My pet has urinated or soiled their bedding and/or cast what do I do?
  - **Answer:** Please remove all soiled bedding from your pet's crate/pen. Assess your pet, as well as the bandage, cast, splint or incisions (if no bandage in place) to see if any urine or feces have transferred through the bandage to the skin level. Gently clean any areas that are not bandaged with mild soap and water or baby wipes. If moisture has penetrated all layers of the bandage, it will need to be removed, and/or replaced. If moisture has not fully penetrated the bandage, you can blow dry the cast until dry and call our office during normal business hours. Please call the office during business hours to set up an appointment. If this occurs over the weekend an emergency clinic or your primary veterinarian can be consulted.

- **Question:** My pet is not interested in food and hasn't eaten after I brought them home from surgery, What should I do?
  - **Answer:** Surgery is often a stressful experience for pets, and it takes them a while to adjust to feeling normal. It may take your pet several days to regain their appetite. Medications and the type of surgery they had may also influence their appetite. Although rare, you may also notice that your pet is drooling or lip-smacking, which may represent nausea. If your pet is feeling nauseous but has not vomited, offer a bland diet and do not administer an NSAID (Carprofen, Meloxicam, Galliprant, Onsior) or antibiotic until they regain their appetite which may take several days. If your pet is vomiting, discontinue food for 12 hours and all medications for 24 hours. Offer only a bland diet (see attached bland diet handout). Medications can be resumed once your pet eats and does not vomit. If vomiting persists, call your primary veterinarian's office, or an emergency facility or VetSurg if during our normal business hours.
- **Question:** My pet has diarrhea or loose stools, what should I do?
  - **Answer:** Diarrhea can occur following surgery. If your pet is experiencing diarrhea, discontinue all medications for 24 hours and offer a bland diet (see attached bland diet handout). Make sure your pet does not soil their bandages or incisions. Diarrhea can be gently cleaned using wet wipes. If skin irritation develops from cleaning, Desitin (infant diaper rash cream) can be applied to the affected areas. If diarrhea persists, call your primary veterinarian's office, or an emergency facility or VetSurg if during our normal business hours.
- **Question:** My pet is panting. What does this mean?
  - **Answer:** Dogs can pant for many reasons. Dogs can pant to cool off when they are anxious, playful or in pain. If your dog is panting and crying at the same time this could be a sign of anxiety and/or pain. Our pain management protocol is comprehensive, however if you feel your pet is painful, you can call VetSurg during normal business hours, your pet's primary veterinarian, or an emergency facility for additional pain medication. Cats rarely pant, so if open mouth breathing is seen in your cat, please call an emergency facility.
- **Question:** How do I know if my pet is overly sedate?
  - **Answer:** The level of sedation required can vary for every pet. Your pet should still be able to respond to their name, or touch. If your pet cannot lift its head or doesn't respond to you, they are likely over-sedated. If your pet is urinating or defecating while asleep (urinary and fecal incontinence) or inappropriately eliminating while away (i.e. defecating without recognizing that it is happening) your pet may be over-sedated. If you feel your pet is over sedated, please lower the dose of Trazodone and Acepromazine by half for 24 hours, then restart at that lower dose. Please follow your discharge instructions and prescription labels regarding the dose range for their sedatives. If your pet is non-responsive or you see changes to their respiration rate, heart rate or gum color please seek emergency care.
- **Question:** How do I know if my pet requires more sedation?
  - **Answer:** The level of sedation can vary for every pet. Please see the above question regarding over-sedation in pets. Ideally, your pet will be resting calmly at home with the assistance of anti-anxiety medications. Pacing, whining, excessive barking, jumping, or standing for prolonged periods in their confinement are all signs that suggest an increase in anti-anxiety medications are needed. Please follow your discharge instructions and prescription labels regarding dose range of sedative medications. If your pet is initially over-sedate when commencing a sedation medication regime then postponing or canceling the next dosage will help the sedative effect normalize. Re-commencing sedation with a half dose initially to determine if some fine-tuning of medication is necessary is often helpful. Further discussion of these changes in medication amounts and frequency of administration can be done by calling our administrative staff during normal business hours.