

Home Care After a Spay

These instructions apply to the first 10–14 days following a routine ovariohysterectomy (spay). Please read through before your pet is discharged so you know what to expect.

⚠ **When to call us immediately:** Pale gums, collapse, uncontrolled bleeding, difficulty breathing, or the incision opens up. For after-hours emergencies, see the contact information at the bottom of this page.

The First Night Home

- Keep your pet indoors in a warm, quiet space.
- Some grogginess or unsteadiness is normal for the first several hours — this is the anesthesia wearing off.
- Restrict activity: no stairs, no jumping on furniture, no unsupervised movement until they are fully steady on their feet.
- Offer small amounts of food and water. It's normal if they're not interested tonight.
- Pets often receive a good amount of IV fluids during surgery, so don't be alarmed if they're not drinking much the day of the procedure — this is expected and nothing to worry about.
- If there is a bandage on one leg, this was placed over the IV catheter site — **remove it after 15 minutes** unless instructed otherwise.
- A mild cough or slightly raspy breathing can occur from the anesthetic breathing tube. This typically resolves within 3 days. Contact us if it worsens.

Eating and Drinking

- Appetite is often reduced the evening of surgery — this is expected.
- By the following morning, most patients resume normal interest in food. Return to their regular diet unless you have been given specific instructions otherwise.
- Water should be available at all times.

Incision Care

The incision is typically located on the midline of the abdomen. **There are no external sutures to remove** — all sutures are placed under the skin and will dissolve on their own over several weeks.

What to expect as it heals:

- Some redness and swelling at the incision in the first 24–48 hours is normal.
- Minor bruising around the site may develop in the first day — this fades with time.
- Over 10–14 days, the incision should become progressively paler, flatter, and less swollen.
- **There should be no discharge.** A small amount of dried crusting at the skin edge is acceptable; any fluid, pus, or persistent oozing is not.

Taking a photo of the incision each day is a simple way to track healing and makes it easier to describe any changes to us.

✓ DO

- Check the incision daily
- Use a cone or e-collar to prevent licking
- If painful: apply a cool (not ice-cold) compress wrapped in a towel for 10 minutes at a time

✗ DON'T

- Allow licking, scratching, or chewing at the site
- Apply any ointments, creams, or cleaning solutions unless instructed
- Get the incision wet (no baths or swimming)

i E-collar / cone of shame: Recommended for the full 10–14 days. It can be removed for supervised meals and leashed walks, but should be back on any time your pet is unsupervised or resting.



Activity Restrictions — 14 Days

Internal sutures need time to hold before the tissues can tolerate normal stress. Overactivity is one of the most common causes of complications after abdominal surgery.

- Leashed walks only — keep them calm.
- No running, jumping, rough play, or climbing.
- No off-leash outdoor time.
- Prevent access to stairs if possible, or supervise carefully.
- No bathing or swimming for the full 14-day healing period.

Medications

- Give all prescribed medications as directed, for the full course — even if your pet seems comfortable.
- **Stop all medications and contact us** if you notice vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite, or blood in the stool after starting them.
- Do not give over-the-counter pain medication (including ibuprofen, aspirin, or acetaminophen) without consulting us first — many human medications are toxic to animals.

Signs That Require Veterinary Attention

Contact us promptly if you notice any of the following:

- The incision is opening, gaping, or has significant discharge
- Swelling at the incision site is rapidly increasing
- Your pet is not eating or drinking by 24 hours post-surgery
- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea
- Lethargy or weakness beyond the first 24 hours
- Difficulty urinating
- Cough that worsens or persists beyond 3 days
- Any other change that concerns you

Seek emergency care immediately for: pale or white gums, collapse, uncontrolled bleeding, or difficulty breathing.

What to Expect: Recovery Timeline

1

Day 1 — Surgery day

Grogginess, reduced appetite, and mild swelling at the incision are expected. Keep your pet confined and quiet.

2

Days 2-3 — Early recovery

Appetite typically returns. Some bruising may appear around the incision. Energy levels may start to improve — continue strict rest despite this.

3

Days 4-10 — Active healing

Swelling and redness at the incision should be decreasing. Maintain activity restrictions. Itching at the incision is common as healing progresses — the e-collar is important during this phase.

4

Days 10-14 — End of restricted period

The skin should be closed and the incision well on its way to healed. If healing has progressed normally, normal activity can resume. Internal sutures continue dissolving over the following weeks.

Follow-Up and Contact

We will reach out the day after surgery to check in. If you have non-urgent updates or photos of the incision, you're welcome to send them through. For anything that concerns you, don't hesitate to call.



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AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCIES

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