POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

Home Care After a Dental Procedure

> These instructions apply to the first 10–14 days following a dental procedure, including any extractions. Please read through before your pet is discharged so you know what to expect.

⚠ **When to call us immediately:** Pale gums, collapse, persistent or heavy bleeding from the mouth, or difficulty breathing. 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.
- A small amount of blood-tinged saliva or drooling tonight is normal, especially if extractions were performed.
- Offer water and a small amount of soft food a few hours after arriving home — see Feeding Care below for what to offer. It's normal if they're not very interested tonight, but appetite should improve by the next day.
- Pets often receive a good amount of IV fluids during their procedure, 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.

Mouth and Extraction Site Care

If any teeth were extracted, **there are no external sutures to remove** — any sutures placed are under the gumline and will dissolve on their own. Gum tissue typically heals in **10–14 days**.

What to expect as it heals:

- Mild redness or swelling of the gums in the first few days is normal.
- A small amount of blood-tinged saliva for the first day or two can be normal, especially after extractions.
- Mild bad breath can persist for a week or so as the tissue heals.
- **There should be no persistent bleeding, swelling that's getting worse, or odor that's getting stronger.** These warrant a call to us.

✓ DO

- Stick to the soft food plan in Feeding Care below
- Give pain medication as prescribed to keep your pet comfortable

✗ DON'T

- Offer hard kibble, hard treats, bones, antlers, or chew toys for 14 days
- Allow chewing on toys, sticks, or other hard objects during this time
- Brush the teeth or use dental chews until cleared at your follow-up

Feeding Care — 14 Days

Soft tissue in the mouth needs time to heal, and hard food or chewing can disrupt that — especially around extraction sites.

- **Soft food or pre-moistened kibble only** for the full 14 days, even if no teeth were extracted.
- To moisten kibble, soak it in warm water for 5–10 minutes until softened.
- No hard treats, bones, antlers, rawhide, or chew toys during this period.
- After 10–14 days, your pet can typically return to normal food and chewing habits — unless we've advised otherwise at a follow-up.
- Avoid tug-of-war, fetch with hard toys, or other activities involving mouth use until cleared to resume normal chewing.

ℹ **E-collar:** Not usually needed after a dental, but may be recommended if your pet is pawing or rubbing excessively at the mouth or face.

Pawing at the Mouth?

If you see your pet pawing at their face, please stop them from doing this — it can damage the healing tissue. A few options:

- Put on a cone (e-collar) to physically prevent contact with the face.
- Give them a cuddle — distraction and comfort often does the trick.
- Try any other gentle distraction — a short walk, a calm activity, or some quiet attention.

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:

- Persistent or worsening bleeding from the mouth
- Swelling of the face or muzzle that's increasing
- Your pet is not eating or drinking by 24 hours post-surgery
- Persistent vomiting, diarrhea, or lethargy beyond 24 hours
- Pawing at the face or mouth that seems excessive or distressed
- Foul odor from the mouth that's getting stronger, not better

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

What to Expect: Recovery Timeline

1. **Day 1 — Procedure day**
   Grogginess, reduced appetite, and mild drooling or blood-tinged saliva are expected. Keep your pet confined and quiet.
2. **Days 2–3 — Early recovery**
   Appetite returns, ideally with soft food. Mild bad breath is common. Energy may improve — keep meals soft regardless.
3. **Days 4–10 — Active healing**
   Gum redness and swelling decreasing. Continue soft food strictly — this is when extraction sites are most vulnerable.
4. **Days 10–14 — End of restricted period**
   Gum tissue should be healed. Your pet can typically return to normal food and chewing habits unless advised otherwise.

Follow-Up Steps

Depending on what was done during your pet's dental, one or more of the following may apply:

- **Extractions performed?** No sutures need removing — they dissolve on their own over a couple of weeks.
- **Book a complimentary technician recheck in 2 weeks** — especially important if your pet had extractions.
- **Biopsy taken?** See Pending Diagnostics below — we'll contact you once results are in.
- **Starting a tooth brushing routine?** Begin brushing — or simply getting your pet comfortable with a finger in their mouth — within the week if no extractions occurred, or within three weeks if teeth were extracted.
- Looking for ways to maintain your pet's oral health going forward? The Veterinary Oral Health Council maintains a list of approved products that help prevent dental disease. For a step-by-step brushing guide, see the WSAVA toothbrushing toolkit, and for other at-home dental care tips, see this Clinician's Brief dental care handout.

Pending Diagnostics

If any samples or imaging were collected during surgery, we will contact you once results are available. Typical turnaround times are listed below for reference — please don't hesitate to follow up with us if you haven't heard back.

- **Routine bloodwork:** 1–3 days. More specialized panels may take longer.
- **Dental X-rays:** Typically reviewed same-day; full report within 1–2 days.
- **Biopsy (oral mass or tissue):** Usually 14–16 days.
- **Bacterial culture and sensitivity:** 3–4 days, up to a week.

Follow-Up and Contact

We will reach out the day after surgery to check in. Updates on how your pet is eating are always welcome. For anything that concerns you, don't hesitate to call.

ROYAL BAY VETERINARY CLINIC

During clinic hours

250-940-4646

hello@royalbayvet.ca

AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCIES

Central Victoria Veterinary Hospital
250-475-2495
760 Roderick St

WAVES Emergency
778-432-4322
947 Langford Parkway