

Post-Operative Care for Dogs and Cats

The period after surgery is a critical part of your pet's recovery. Proper home care prevents complications, supports healing, and ensures your pet's comfort. Every animal recovers differently depending on the procedure, age, and overall health. This guide outlines the key steps for safe and stress-free recovery following routine surgeries such as sterilisation, dental extractions, mass removals, or wound closures.

1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF RECOVERY



- Keep your pet in a **quiet, temperature-controlled environment** for 24–48 hours after discharge.
- Minimise stress and excitement—no rough play, jumping, or outdoor/off leash running.
- Observe your pet closely for the first night: monitor breathing, comfort, and alertness.
- Restrict access to stairs or high furniture to prevent accidental injury.

2 FEEDING AND HYDRATION



- Offer a **small, light meal** (50% of normal food intake) once your pet is fully awake and coordinated. Food should be soaked or blended post dental procedure.
- Temporary loss of appetite is common for the first 12–24 hours
- Provide **fresh water** at all times, but don't force feeding.
- If vomiting or refusal to eat persists beyond 24 hours, contact your vet.



3 EXERCISE & ACTIVITY RESTRICTION



- **Short, controlled leash walks only** for toileting until your vet advises otherwise.

It's common for pets not to pass stool for the first 24–48 hours after surgery.

- No running, jumping, climbing, or playing with other pets during the recovery period (typically 7-10 days).
- Cats should be confined indoors or to a single safe room until sutures are removed.



4 WOUND CARE



- **Do not allow licking, biting, or scratching** of the incision site.
- Always keep an **Elizabethan collar (e-collar) or surgical vest** on your pet until sutures are removed or the wound has fully healed.
- Check the incision **twice daily** for redness, swelling, discharge, or foul odour.
- A small amount of bruising or clear fluid may be normal, but any pus, bleeding, or gaping requires immediate veterinary attention.
- Keep the area **dry and clean**—no bathing or swimming until advised.

5 MEDICATION AND PAIN RELIEF



- Give all prescribed medications exactly as directed—never skip or double doses.
- Use only medications dispensed by your veterinarian. Human painkillers such as ibuprofen or aspirin are toxic to pets.
- If your pet appears restless, cries when moving, or refuses food despite medication, inform your vet.



6 MONITORING AND RED FLAGS



Contact your veterinarian immediately if you notice any of the following:

- Continuous bleeding or swelling at the surgical site.
- Persistent panting or difficulty breathing
- Abnormal discharge from surgery site (yellow, green, or foul-smelling).
- Persistent vomiting, diarrhoea, or refusal to eat beyond 24 hours.
- Weakness, shivering, or pale gums.
- Sudden chewing at the wound despite the e-collar.
- Separation of sutures or visible tissue opening.

7 NOTES FOR SPECIFIC PROCEDURES



1. AFTER STERILISATION (SPAY/NEUTER)

- Mild swelling near the incision is normal for 2—3 days.
- Males and females should be prevented from licking or jumping; females should also avoid stretching movements that strain the abdomen.

2. AFTER DENTAL PROCEDURES

- Feed soft food for 7-10 days.
- Avoid chew toys or dental treats until cleared by your vet.
- Slight drooling or blood-tinged saliva may occur for 24 hours.

3. AFTER ORTHOPAEDIC OR MAJOR SURGERY

- Strict cage rest may be required.
- Use non-slip flooring like carpets with grip or foam mats.
- Attend all scheduled bandage changes or physiotherapy appointments.

+ WHAT TO EXPECT AT YOUR VET VISIT

- A follow-up appointment 3 days post-surgery to see how your pet is getting on
- Subsequent follow up appointment, if indicated for suture removal and wound inspection.
- Review of pain control, appetite, and activity levels.
 - Advice on when to resume full exercise, bathing and normal feeding.
 - Updated recommendations for parasite control or preventive care if due.

Myth vs. Fact

MYTH BUSTING SOME COMMON INACCURACIES



“My pet doesn’t need an e-collar if they’re calm.”



“If the wound looks fine, I can stop antibiotics early.”



“Cats clean themselves, so licking helps healing.”



Even calm pets often lick their wounds overnight. It’s not possible to monitor your pets 24/7 - most complications occur when collars are removed too soon.

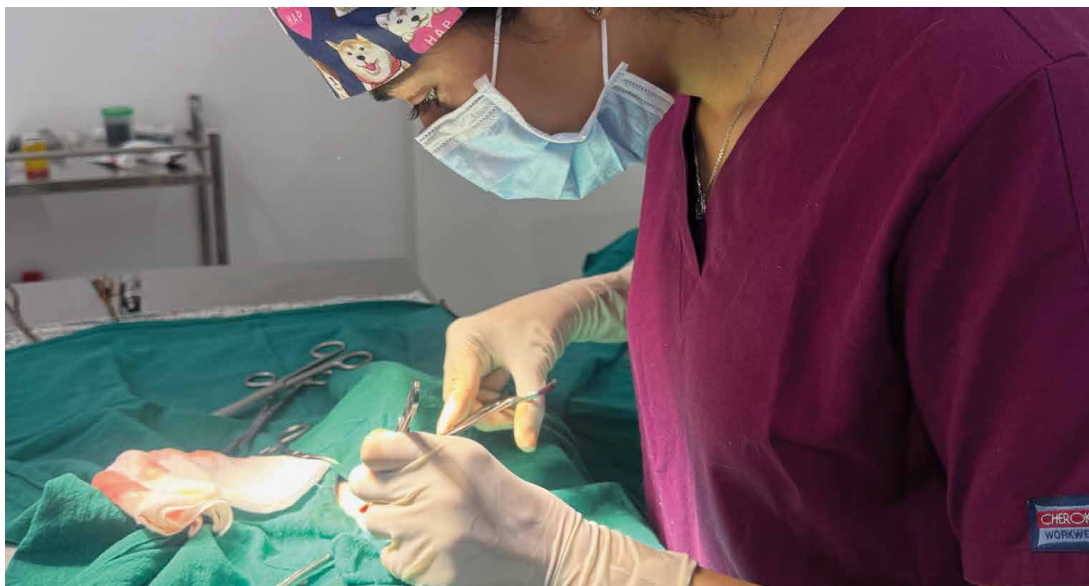


Stopping medications prematurely can cause infection or resistance—always complete the full course.



Licking introduces bacteria and delays healing. Prevent all access to the wound





SUMMARY CHECKLIST

FOR PET PARENTS

- Use an e-collar or recovery vest continuously until advised to remove.
- Keep the incision dry, clean, and monitored daily.
- Limit activity strictly—short leash walks only.
- Give medications on time and complete the full course.
- Schedule your follow-up appointment before leaving the clinic.



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