

## Caring for Your Cat After Surgery

Thank you for spaying/neutering your cat. You have just helped to decrease the potential number of homeless animals and made your cat healthier and happier! Although spays and neuters are common procedures, please remember that your pet has just gone through surgery and needs appropriate care to properly recover.

**Note:** The postoperative care line can be reached at (844) MY-ASPCA, (844) 692-7722. If you have any questions or concerns after your pet has had surgery, call this number and choose the option that allows you to speak to a Client Services Representative. Prior to seeking any veterinary care for a cat with a postoperative complication, you must contact the postoperative care line, which is available 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Please be advised that if an animal's illness or injury is not related to the surgery, the ASPCA will not be responsible for costs associated with care. In addition, if postoperative instructions were not followed, the cost of the re-check appointment and care may not be covered by the ASPCA.

### Anesthesia and Surgery

Monitor your pet for any signs of abnormal recovery from anesthesia and/or surgery. These may include, bleeding, lethargy or weakness, loss of appetite/decreased water intake, shivering, unsteady gait that persist beyond 24 hours after surgery.

Call the post-operative care line immediately if your pet experiences vomiting, diarrhea, labored breathing or has pale gums.

### Vaccinations

If your pet received vaccinations, monitor the site of vaccination (shoulder/hind leg) and check for signs that your dog is having a reaction to the vaccine. These include, swelling of face, hives, limping, drooling, itchiness or pain or swelling at the vaccine site (shoulder/hind leg). If any of these signs occur, call the postoperative care line.

### Food and Water

Approximately half your pet's normal serving of food and water should be offered about two hours after returning home from the clinic. Many cats will not eat on the night they return home from the clinic.

If your pet is under 16 weeks of age, feed him/her approximately half the normal amount of food and water as soon as you return home. If your kitten will not eat when he/she returns home and you can **without risk of being bitten or scratched**, rub maple or Karo Syrup on the pet's gums by using a cotton-tipped applicator.

Do not remove your pet's E-collar for feeding unless you are able to supervise while the E-collar is off. Replace the E-collar immediately after your pet is finished eating.

### Pain Medication

Your pet was given long-acting pain medication in conjunction with the spay/neuter surgery. **DO NOT GIVE HUMAN MEDICATION TO YOUR PET.** It is dangerous and can be fatal.

### Surgery Site

There are no stitches on the outside of the surgery site. All stitches are underneath the skin. These stitches dissolve, so there is no need to seek medical attention for suture removal. The two sides of the incision are also adhered with medical grade glue.

The surgery site on a male cat is so small that it does not need to be closed with stitches or medical grade glue. It is acceptable to see one or two small openings on the scrotum.

If your animal easily allows, check the surgery site daily to make sure that it is healing. If the surgery site is very red, has green/yellow or reddish discharge, has a bad odor, has something sticking out from it, is warm to the touch, or has bruising or a bump that seems to be growing, contact the postoperative care line.



Do not apply any products to the surgery site unless recommended by staff members of the ASPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic.

### **Tattoo**

Animals who have had surgery receive a small green tattoo. For female cats, the tattoo is placed alongside the surgical incision. For male cats, the tattoo is placed on the lower part of the abdomen. Please monitor the tattoo site for redness, swelling, or discharge. If these occur, please contact the postoperative care line.

### **Licking the Surgery Site**

Prevent your pet from licking the surgery site as licking at the incision can cause a painful infection. Your pet's E-collar should prevent him/her from licking. Please use the E-collar for seven to 10 days after surgery. If your pet is still able to lick the surgery site while wearing the E-collar, contact the postoperative care line.

### **Keep Your Pet Away from Other Animals**

Keep neutered males away from unspayed females. Neutered males can get an unspayed female pregnant for up to 30 days after neuter surgery. Keep spayed females away from unneutered males who may wish to mount them. Animals returning from the Spay/Neuter Clinic may also smell different to other animals in the household. This can cause the animals to fight, so be prepared to keep your pets in separate areas for a few days following surgery.

### **Bathroom Habits**

Contact the postoperative care line if your cat is straining to urinate within 72 hours after spay/neuter surgery. Monitor your pet's urine for blood. A small amount may be present in female animals during the first 24 hours after surgery. If this continues, call the postoperative care line.

Litter dust can get into the surgery site of male cats and cause an infection. Shredded paper, a brand of litter called Yesterday's News (can be purchased at pet stores), or uncooked, long-grain rice should be used in the litter box for at least a week after surgery.

**Bathing Your Pet** Do not bathe your pet for 10 days following surgery.

### **Housing**

Helping your cat feel safe and comfortable is important to the recovery process.

- Place your cat in a quiet dark confined area such as a bathroom.
- Keep in mind that cats may hide after surgery. It is a good idea to block access to all places where your cat could hide to allow monitoring of the healing process.

### **Behavior**

Spaying or neutering your pet can reduce or eliminate certain undesirable behaviors, such as urine marking, mounting, aggression, or spraying, but these behaviors may have already been learned and might not go away completely. If these behaviors do go away, they might do so gradually:

- It may take up to 30 days for male cats to stop spraying and for female cats to stop showing signs of heat.
- Older male cats may continue to spray, but their urine will not smell as bad.