

General Practice Service
Willows Information Sheets

My pet has had surgery – what should I expect?





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When you drop your pet off with us you will usually be asked to telephone us for an update at a certain time later that day. However, you may receive a telephone call before this time to let you know how the procedure has gone and to discuss a collection time.

The collection time given is usually the earliest time when the vet is happy that your pet will be stable and comfortable enough to go home. You are welcome to collect later than this time, but please arrive before 6.30pm. Some patients will be kept overnight, for example elderly or frail patients, those undergoing major procedures or where additional pain relief is required.

Pets will be discharged by either the vet in charge or a veterinary nurse. Please feel free to discuss any concerns or questions you may have at this time.

For most surgical procedures an area of coat will have been clipped off. You may be surprised at the extent of a clipped area. Removing plenty of hair around a surgical site is very important for sterility of the procedure. Very occasionally animals with sensitive skin will become a little sore from the action of the clippers – so called 'clipper rash'. Please let us know if this occurs.

It is important that your pet does not lick any surgical wounds. Animal's tongues are abrasive and cause much inflammation. They will also introduce bacteria to the wound. Dressings may have been applied to act as a barrier and any on-going pain relief may also reduce the interest shown in a wound by the patient. However if you think your pet will lick or chew at a wound a buster collar can be provided.

Stitches may or may not be visible. In some wounds we use absorbable stitches within the skin layer so that there are no stitches to irritate on the outside of the wound. Sometimes visible stitches are more appropriate and these will need to be removed after 10 to 14 days.

If a dressing has been applied you should receive instructions as to how to care for it. Sticky dressings can usually be removed after 2 to 3 days. Bandages are usually removed by the vet and must be kept dry and clean at all times. A plastic bag or covering should be used to cover dressings before the animal goes outside. (Please note that plastic coverings should not be left on all the time as they can cause the paw to become sweaty and sore).

Usually animals are rather drowsy on the night after an anaesthetic. Depending on the age and condition of the pet and also the length of the anaesthetic, it can take a few days for the patient to get back up to speed. However, young fit animals may bounce back by the next day and need to be kept calm to protect their surgical wounds. While pets are feeling drowsy, it is important to allow them to rest. Other pets and children should be kept away and cats should be kept indoors until they are fully recovered and any wounds are fully healed. Your vet will discuss appropriate levels of post-operative exercise, depending on the surgery which has been performed. Generally exercise will need to be restricted while the surgical wound heals. Please discuss the level of exercise which is appropriate to your pet with the vet or discharge nurse.

Depending upon circumstances, patients may be offered a small meal as soon as they have recovered from their anaesthetic, so please let us know if your pet has any special dietary requirements. Generally we recommend bland food (e.g. tinned Waltham's sensitivity control or boiled chicken and rice) after general anaesthesia, as some animals can react with an upset tummy.

You may be given medication for your pet to take post-operatively. It is important that you understand when the medication is to be started, how it is to be given, how often it is to be given and for how long. If your discharge notes do not specify medications which your pet is already on, please be sure to check with the discharge nurse that there is no problem for you to keep giving these.

Most procedures will be followed by one or two post-operative examinations. The purpose of these consultations is to assess your pet's progress, make sure the wounds are healing well, remove stitches where necessary and to discuss any queries you may have.

If you have any concerns at any stage after your pet's operation, please do not hesitate to [contact us](#).

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