

Road to Recovery: Post Op Care for Pets

After surgery, the most important point to remember is to strictly follow professional recommendations for rehabilitation and recovery. Doing so may help your pet recover fully. In some cases, it may also mean the difference between life and death. For example, a surgical site that fails to heal due to re-injury or infection, such as a joint replacement or fracture repair, can leave a veterinary surgeon with few treatment options.

Before You Leave the Practice

- Make sure you understand all your veterinarian's discharge instructions. Ask to review them with a technician if you have questions.
- Find out what the practice's procedures are for after-hours help if there is a problem.
- Take all prescribed medications with you. Ask your veterinarian what the pain control plan is for your pet.
- Find out when the veterinarian next wishes to examine your pet and make the appointment.

Following professional recommendations for rehabilitation and recovery is the most important part of helping your dog heal.

We're Home! Now What?

- Recognize that your pet may still be feeling the effects of anesthesia and may be unsteady on his or her feet even hours after the procedure. Keep him or her in a quiet and contained place if necessary.
- Supervise eating and drinking. Provide food and water in small amounts until you are sure



Some swelling will be normal immediately after surgery, but watch the surgery site carefully for any signs of oozing, odors, heat, pain, or redness.

- the pet is back to normal. Follow all instructions for special nutritional requirements.
- Monitor your pet's bathroom activities. Make sure he or she is taking care of business as expected. Also be aware that some pets, especially if they have been given fluids, may need more frequent bathroom breaks.
- Follow your veterinarian's instructions regarding whether or not your pet needs to be kept leashed, crated, or contained in a room.

Monitoring Surgical Sites

Some swelling will be normal immediately after surgery, but watch the surgery site carefully for any signs of oozing, odors, heat, pain, or redness. Do not allow your pet to scratch or chew at the sutures or bandage. An Elizabethan collar—also known as an “e” collar—may be necessary to prevent your pet from chewing the wound.

Recovery Times

Typically, full recovery from a compound fracture repair or orthopedic surgery, such as total hip replacement (THR), will take at least two to three months. Some dogs will require six months of care-

Keeping Your Caged Pet – and You – Sane

It's hard to know whether cage rest is harder on the pet or on the owner. This can be a trying time, but no matter how "sad" or how much "better" your pet seems to be, it is vitally important to observe all of your veterinarian's restrictions. You can make the time go faster for your pet by keeping him or her occupied with low calorie treats, toys, and by playing a radio or television for company. Daily grooming can also be a welcome distraction for some pets. Keeping your pet's crate in a high traffic area where he or she will have plenty of activity to watch can be another way to keep them entertained. If your pet is easily agitated, you might instead want to keep the crate in a quiet room to reduce stress.

When taking your pet out for bathroom breaks, keep him or her on a leash at all times. Follow your veterinarian's instructions regarding avoiding stairs, slippery floors, and whether you should attach the leash to a collar or harness. Ask your veterinarian what is the best way to lift or support your pet when it is required.

For cats, a large dog crate with small litter pan inside may provide adequate containment. Be sure to cover the slippery plastic floor with an inexpensive nonslip rug or segment.

ful monitoring and rehabilitation before they reach optimal recovery. Other less invasive surgeries, such as a neuter or an ovariohysterectomy (spay), may require only a matter of days or weeks.

Follow Up

It is critical to keep all of your pet's recommended follow up appointments so that your veterinarian can monitor your pet's progress. If sutures were used, your veterinarian may need to remove them. If a cast was placed, your veterinarian may want to check it periodically and eventually remove it. Radiographs or other procedures may be scheduled to assess healing.

Physical therapy, including massage and hydrotherapy, may also be helpful to your pet's recovery and may be prescribed. ♦

