



Frequently Asked Questions Following Surgery

When should my pet have their first bowel movement after surgery?

- Many pets will not have a bowel movement for the first 4 to 5 days after surgery
- Reasons that your pet will not have regular bowel movements after surgery include:
 - Your pet was fasted prior to surgery.
 - Pets may not eat well during the hospital stay or when they first arrive at home.
 - Anesthesia can temporarily slow down the intestinal tract.
 - Some pain control medications can slow down the intestinal tract.
- If your pet does not have a bowel movement by the 5th day of being home, a stool softener such as Metamucil or canned pumpkin can be fed.
 - The dose or amount of Metamucil is 1 teaspoon per 50 pounds of body weight mixed in with each meal (canned food works best). This must be fed immediately after mixing, as the Metamucil will gel the food and may make it less palatable. Canned pumpkin can be used at 1 tablespoon per 50 pounds of body weight twice daily for dogs and 0.5-1.5 teaspoons total twice daily for cats.
- If your pet has not defecated in 7 days, please call us for recommendations.
- If your pet is straining to defecate or seems uncomfortable, please call us for assistance.

My pet had surgery and will not eat. What can be done?

- Dogs
 - Remember that pets may not eat well the first day or two after they get home from surgery.
 - Many pets will not eat their regular dog food after surgery, especially if it is kibble.
 - Offer a cooked diet having a 1:1 ratio of a protein source and carbohydrate source. The protein source can be any cooked meat (example: chicken breast, turkey breast, lean hamburger) that is low in fat (drain off any fat after the meat has been cooked). The carbohydrate can be pasta, potato or white rice.
 - Try canned food; to enhance the flavor sprinkle a very small amount of garlic powder or a chicken/beef broth.
 - Try Gerber strained meats for babies such as the chicken, beef, turkey, or veal.
 - Try Hill's A/D diet available at most veterinary hospitals.
 - Try hand feeding your pet: place a small amount of food in their mouth so that they get the flavor.
 - Warm the food slightly in a microwave, as the food will be more aromatic. Stir the food before feeding and test the temperature; it should only be lukewarm.

- If none of the above are effective and your pet has not eaten well for 48 hours, please call us for additional help.
- Cats
 - Remember that many cats will not eat the first day or two after they get home from surgery.
 - Offer smelly foods that contain fish such as tuna or canned cat foods
 - Try Gerber strained meats for babies such as the chicken, beef, turkey or veal.
 - Try hand feeding: with your finger place a small amount of food on the roof of your cat's mouth; use a syringe to get soft food into the mouth.
 - Warm the food slightly in a microwave as the food will be more aromatic. Stir the food before feeding and test the temperature; it should be only lukewarm.
 - Some cats will only eat dry food. Try kibble if your cat normally has been fed that food.
 - Petting and stroking your cat frequently will help to stimulate appetite.
 - If none of the above are effective and your pet has not eaten well for 48 hours, please call us for additional help.

My pet is vomiting. What can be done?

- The first thing for you to discern is whether your pet is vomiting or regurgitating. Both will result in fluid or food being brought up. Vomiting pets will show active heaving or retching of the abdomen prior to expulsion of the ingesta. Regurgitation is not associated with heaving and the pet usually just opens their mouth and fluid or food will be expelled. Usually the regurgitated material will be clear or brown colored fluid.
- Next is to identify the cause of the vomiting or regurgitation.
- Please call your regular veterinarian or MedVet if your pet is vomiting or regurgitating.
- Causes and treatment of vomiting after surgery:
 - If your pet has recently had surgery of the intestines or stomach, vomiting is always a concern. Call immediately if your pet is vomiting.
 - When some pets return home after a stay in the hospital, they may drink excessive amounts of water at one time and then vomit. If this appears to be the case, the water should be limited to frequent smaller amounts.
 - Medications such as antibiotics, pain relievers or nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAID) can cause vomiting after surgery. In order to determine which medication is causing the problem, the administration of each drug should be separated by 2 hours. Usually the pet will vomit or appear nauseated (excessive drooling) within 1 hour of administration of the medication that is causing a problem. Be sure to call MedVet prior to stopping any medications, as they might be vital for your pet's care.
 - Stomach upset from anesthesia is a potential cause of vomiting and will pass within 1-2 days.
 - Symptomatic treatment of vomiting involves withholding food for 12 to 24 hours, and then introducing small amounts of bland food throughout the day in 3-4 meals. If your pet does not vomit after that, then gradually wean him/her back onto the regular diet after 3 days. This bland food is a cooked diet having a 1:1 ratio of a protein source and carbohydrate source. The protein source can be any

cooked meat (example: chicken breast, turkey breast, lean hamburger) that is low in fat (drain off all fat after the meat has been cooked). The carbohydrate can be pasta, potato or white rice.

- Over-the-counter drugs can be used to help decrease the acidity of the stomach. However, please contact your MedVet veterinarian for suggestions before giving your pet any medications.
- Causes and treatment of regurgitation after surgery:
 - The most common cause of regurgitation is reflux of acid from the stomach into the esophagus while your pet is under anesthesia. Acidic fluid from the stomach can cause a chemical irritation of the esophagus and result in a bad case of heart-burn, called esophagitis. If you suspect your pet may have this, please contact your Medvet veterinarian.

How do I know that my dog is in pain following surgery?

- Signs of pain include:
 - Crying.
 - Biting if you get near the surgical site.
 - Panting.
 - Restlessness, inability to sleep, pacing.
 - If abdominal surgery was done the pet may not lie down on the incision, or will continually sit up in spite of appearing tired.
 - The majority of pain occurs over the first 2 to 3 days after surgery.

What can I do to control my dog's pain?

- Prescribed medications that control pain: tramadol, Buprenex, or a fentanyl patch may have been sent home with your pet.
- NSAID's are used to control pain and inflammation and may have been sent home with your pet (e.g. Deramaxx, Rimadyl, Previcox, or Meloxicam).
- *Do not* give any human medications for pain, as animals cannot tolerate many human formulations. Only give medications as directed by your veterinarian.
- If an orthopedic surgery has been done, cold packing the surgical site may be helpful.
 - Cold packing can be accomplished using a variety of cold sources (bags of ice, bags of frozen vegetables, commercial ice packs). Icing the surgical site reduces pain by numbing the area and decreasing inflammation. Provide a barrier between the cold object and your pet's skin such as a thin towel or cloth. Cold packing can be done for 15-20 minutes at a time three times a day. ****Remember, if it is too cold for your skin, it is too cold for your pet. ****

How do I know that my cat is in pain following surgery?

- Pain is more difficult to assess in cats compared to dogs, as signs can be more subtle and cats usually do not vocalize when in pain.
- Signs of pain in a cat include the following:
 - Biting if you get near the surgical site.

- Growling.
- Not wanting to eat.
- Hiding and not wanting to be near their owner.
- Note: These behaviors are not unique to pain alone and can be associated with non-painful conditions/circumstances.

What can be done for pain at home for my cat?

- If you feel your cat is painful, please call MedVet or your veterinarian so that we can discuss safe and appropriate pain medications. The majority of over-the-counter pain medications are *not* safe to give cats.

Is it okay for my pet to lick their incision?

- No, it is absolutely not acceptable at any time for a pet to lick their incisions.
- If a pet licks their incision, the healing process will be delayed.
- Licking can remove stitches and cause the incision to open, which may necessitate another surgery and added costs and patient discomfort.
- Licking can cause infection as the mouth has many bacteria. Infection may cause a surgical site to become infected and can have severe consequences for your pet.
- Dogs will frequently lick their incisions when you are not watching (night time). If the skin looks red or irritated, it could be from licking.
- It is imperative to prevent your pet from licking. The following can be tried:
 - Elizabethan collar (cone or “lampshade” collar) should have been dispensed and should be used as directed.
 - A cervical collar (Bite Not collar resembles an inner tube) is another device and can be effective at stopping a pet from licking the surgical site.
 - A T-shirt can be used to cover an incision on the chest or front part of the abdomen. Gather the waist of the shirt up over the dog's back and wrap an elastic band around this part of the shirt (do not put the band on your pet).
 - A bandage or sock can be used to cover an incision on a limb.
 - Skin sutures/staples should remain in place a full 10-14 days.

What are signs of infection?

- There are many signs of infection, but the most common are redness around the incision, swelling around the incision, or discharge from the incision.
- Usually infection of the incision is painful and your pet may seem restless or uncomfortable.
- If you are concerned about infection, please contact MedVet or your veterinarian immediately as treatment should be started as soon as possible.

When should I expect to hear about my pet's biopsy or culture results?

- In most cases, the biopsy or culture results return in 5-7 days. Please call MedVet if you have not heard about the results in 7 days.
 - One notable exception are bone biopsies. These biopsies require special processing so the results may take up to 10-14 days to return.

How often should my pet urinate after surgery?

- In most cases, your pet should urinate at least 1-2 times a day.
- If your pet is not urinating at least once a day, please seek veterinary attention.
- Reasons your pet may not urinate:
 - After orthopedic surgery, it can be difficult to posture normally to urinate and defecate.
 - After surgery, your pet may not want to walk outside to urinate.
 - Some pain medications can decrease the urge to urinate.

Can my pet sleep in my bed with me after surgery?

- No, because it only takes one fall or unexpected jump for a complication to occur.

Is bruising normal after surgery?

- A small amount of bruising around or below the incision is normal after most surgeries. Bruising can take several days to develop and weeks to resolve.
- As in humans, this bruising will change from purple to red with yellow and green hues and then resolve.
- If the area of bruising progressively enlarges and/or is accompanied by tender swelling, please call your MedVet veterinarian.

Is a small amount of swelling of the ankle normal after limb surgery?

- Yes. Many surgeries of the limbs will result in some edema (swelling) of the ankle. The ankle is the lowest joint below the incision and gravity draws the swelling down to that area. When this tissue is pressed with a finger, it will retain the “dimple” from the pressure for a few seconds then return to normal shape. This edema is normal and will resolve in a few days after surgery.