



Spay/neuter post-surgical care and recovery instructions

Following spay/neuter surgery, your pet will require time and a little extra attention to ensure their body properly heals. The following aftercare instructions provide guidelines for the next several days of your pet's recovery, as well as what to expect and potential red flags.

If you have questions or concerns that are not addressed here, please call AHS Vet Centers at [763-489-7729](tel:763-489-7729).

How to care for your pet after spay/neuter surgery



Aftercare instructions

The first 24 hours post-surgery

- Allow your pet to recover in a quiet, safe place indoors.
- Be aware that your pet's behavior may be slightly altered in the first 24 hours after surgery. For example, they may be glassy-eyed, sleepy, nauseous, wobbly, vocal, shivering, or irritable.
- Encourage frequent movement indoors to help your pet recover from the anesthesia. Allowing them to rest uninterrupted will result in longer recovery and potential complications.
- Offer small amounts of the food they eat regularly and water later in the evening. Your pet may feel nauseous, and it can take up to 48 hours for their appetite to return to normal.
- You may notice your pet received a small green tattoo, indicating they've been sterilized. This tattoo is not an extra incision and does not require cleaning.

The 10-14 days following surgery

- **Your pet should be closely supervised and on an exercise restriction for the next 10-14 days.** Keep your pet quiet as quiet as possible during the first two weeks. Avoid running, jumping, and excessive playing. Strenuous activity increases your pet's risk of developing swelling around the incision site that could result in premature dissolving of sutures, opening of the incision, and costly medical care that would be your responsibility.
- Keep the incision dry. No bathing, swimming, or playing in deep snow.
- Check the incision twice daily until healed.
 - A small amount of blood is normal immediately after surgery.
 - Some redness and swelling of the incision is expected and normal.
 - If you have questions or concerns, consult the detailed information packet sent home with your pet after surgery or call us at [763-489-7729](tel:763-489-7729).
- Do not allow your pet to lick, scratch, or chew the incision. If this occurs, an Elizabethan collar (E-collar) must be used to help prevent potentially serious post-operative complications.

- Male dogs and cats can still impregnate an unsterilized female up to one month after surgery. Please keep a close eye on your pet.

Protecting your pet's incision

Do not allow your pet to lick or chew their incision. Licking can lead to serious complications like the incision opening or becoming infected. This can be painful and may require follow-up visits which could result in unexpected costs.

Recommended: Elizabethan collar (also called an E-collar or cone)

To prevent irritating the incision, we recommend you purchase an Elizabethan collar (E-collar) to keep your pet from being able to reach the area with their mouth. These cone collars are the most effective protection against your pet causing trauma to their incision, and should be worn for 10-14 days following surgery.



E-collars can be purchased from AHS or at most pet stores. They're only effective if fitted properly. The cone should go past your pet's nose by two inches. If it's any shorter, they're likely still able to reach their incision.

Alternatives to E-collars

If your pet won't tolerate an E-collar, consider one of the following options:

- **Onesies for female dogs or cats**
 - Onesies are bodysuits for infants and can be purchased at any superstore (like Target or Walmart). Typically onesies are short sleeved and button in the pelvis area.
 - Sizing: Small kittens (four to five pounds) require a newborn size; adult cats or puppies under eight pounds usually wear a size 0-3 months; and larger cats or small dogs usually require a size 3-6 months.

- To fit: Put the onesie over your pet's head and their front legs through the arm holes. Bring the bottom pieces together like you are going to button them and cut a hole for their tail and backside. Once the hole is made, button the onesie closed. If the neck is loose, you can use a rubber band to bunch the material together.
- **Boxer shorts for male dogs**
 - To fit: Put your pet's back legs through the leg holes in the shorts. Their tail will fit through the fly. Rubber band the extra material on top of their back to keep the shorts from coming off. You will either need to cut a hole or take the boxers off when you take them outside to defecate.

What to expect after surgery

The following guidelines will help you to determine if your pet's recovery is normal, requires attention, or is in a state of emergency. These guidelines don't cover every potential issue, so if you have concerns that are not addressed here, please call us at [763-489-7729](tel:763-489-7729) or [seek emergency treatment at one of these locations](#).

+ Normal issues after surgery

These issues should resolve on their own over a few days. Contact us if you see no signs of improvement or things worsen over time.

- Small amount of bloody discharge from surgical incision
- Redness or a small amount of swelling or bruising at the site of incision
- Whining or crying the first night after surgery
- Decreased energy during the 24 hours following surgery
- Not urinating or defecating on their normal schedule
- Open neuter incision (males only) with minor discharge

+ Issues that require attention, but are not an emergency

Please call [763-489-7729](tel:763-489-7729) if your pet experiences the following:

- Significant swelling at the surgical incision
- Colored discharge from the incision
- Pale gums
- Not returning to eating or drinking days after surgery
- Intermittent vomiting for days after surgery
- Slight gaps at the spay incision (females only)
- Swollen painful scrotum (males only) days after surgery

+ Emergency issues after surgery

Please take your pet to a local, 24-hour emergency clinic if you see any of the following:

- Consistent flow of blood from surgical incision
- Consistent vomiting that won't stop
- Difficulty breathing
- Not waking up or inability to stand
- The spay incision is completely open (females only)

[Review our listing of local 24-hour, emergency veterinary clinics.](#) Please remember you will be responsible for any costs incurred if your pet is treated at one of these locations.

Questions or concerns?

Contact us at [763-489-7729](tel:763-489-7729).

We will make every reasonable effort to treat complications resulting from your pet's surgery. We also offer post-op exams at no cost (though some fees may apply if

medications are needed).