



HOW TO CARE FOR YOUR PET FOLLOWING LIMB AMPUTATION SURGERY

Limb amputation is a surgical procedure commonly performed in dogs & cats to remove a diseased or injured limb, either front or rear. Pets function exceptionally well on three legs and are able to run, walk, and play without pain or discomfort. Pets do not suffer the psychological distress of losing a limb the same way a human does. The primary purpose of the limb is in movement. Because pets do not need to perform fine motor skills, they easily adapt to having only three legs.

There is little that you can do to prevent your pet from developing a tumor that might necessitate amputation. However, if trauma is the cause, steps can be taken to avoid it from occurring in the first place.

Although your pet will bounce back to normal as soon as possible, and with vigorous energy and excitement, you still need to take extra precaution to help prevent future injuries:

- Keep a close eye on your pet's remaining healthy limbs, especially the leg which is opposite of the amputated one. Pets can live a long and healthy life with only three legs, but of course if another of his healthy limbs starts to decline in any form or fashion, this can cause a serious mobility problem.
- Watch your pet's movements on a daily basis and make sure that he is not getting slower or weaker. Should this happen, contact our office immediately.
- During the rehabilitation period, it is not unusual for your pet to strain its muscles or stretch the scar tissue that has newly formed in the operative site, causing lameness. This lameness is typically rapid in onset and gradually gets better within 3-5 days. Treatment with nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (such as Previcox or Carprofen) is appropriate during these episodes. Be sure to contact our office to ensure your pet will be receiving the appropriate dose prior to giving any medication. If your pet does not seem to be rehabilitating normally, or if you have concerns, you should contact our office to talk with a veterinarian, or schedule a post-operative appointment so that a veterinarian may examine your pet and determine exactly what is going on and take any necessary steps to correct the problem.
- Every pet and each case is unique. If you have questions or concerns, do not hesitate to make us aware of them. If you have any questions or problems during your pet's rehabilitation, call our office. A staff member or veterinarian is available to speak with you 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Post-Operative Care and Prevention:

- Your pet will return home with prescriptions for oral analgesics or anti-inflammatory drugs such as Previcox, Carprofen, Meloxicam or Onsior.
- The incision site will need to be assessed daily for swelling, redness or discharge. Contact our office immediately if you have questions or concerns.
- Bruising and fluid accumulation around incisions are common. You can apply a cool washcloth to the area for a few minutes two or three times per day.
- Pets must remain indoors until their surgical sites heal and stitches or staples are removed.
- Stitches or staples need to be removed in 10-14 days. Do not allow your pet to lick or chew at the surgical site. An Elizabethan (cone) collar may be necessary to prevent this from occurring.

PROPER RESTRAINT

Your pet may still be slightly groggy from the anesthesia as he/she leaves the office. To prevent any injury, it is best to have your pet in a carrier or on a leash when leaving the clinic. A carrier will ensure the safety of your pet and decrease any chance of injury during the ride home. Upon arriving home, provide a quiet area where your pet can fully recover over the next 12-24 hours.

ELIMINATION

The gastrointestinal tract can be affected by general anesthesia and pain medication. This may result in your pet having soft stools or constipation for 24-36 hours following the general anesthesia and surgical procedure. Some pets may have bright red blood on their stools associated with stress. If any changes persist beyond 36 hours, please contact our office.

SUTURES

Suture material was used to close the incision; the sutures need to be removed in 10-14 days. You should check your pet's incision daily. Excessive swelling, redness or discharge should be reported immediately to our office. There should not be any bleeding. If your pet's incision begins to bleed or have any discharge, call our office immediately. Some licking is expected; if your pet begins to lick or chew obsessively at the incision sight, we can provide you with a special collar to prevent complications.

MONITOR

While we feel confident your pet will recover normally, there are risks associated with any episode of general anesthesia. Call our office if you note any abnormalities over the next week. These include, but are not limited to:

- *Loss of appetite for more than 2 days
- *Refusal to drink water for more than 1 day
- *Weakness or listlessness
- *Vomiting

PAIN MEDICATION

Begin administering your pet's pain medication tomorrow morning.

QUESTIONS

If you have any questions about your pet's follow-up care, please call our office immediately!