

## *Valley Central Veterinary Referral and Emergency Center*

### **Frequently Asked Questions After My Dog's Surgery**

#### **When should my dog have their first bowel movement after surgery?**

- Many dogs will not have a bowel movement for the first 4-5 days after surgery.
- Reasons that a dog will not have a regular bowel movement after surgery include:
  - Your dog has been fasted prior to surgery.
  - Your dog may not have eaten well during their hospital stay or the first few days at home.
  - Pain medications may slow down the digestive tract.
- If your dog does not have a bowel movement after 4-5 days upon returning home, a stool softener like Metamucil<sup>®</sup> or canned pumpkin can be given.

#### **My dog had surgery and now is not eating. What can I do?**

- Most may not eat their regular diet after surgery, especially if it is kibble.
- Offer a cooked diet of lean meat (chicken or hamburger) mixed with mashed potatoes or rice. Gradually wean your dog back onto their regular diet over a few days.
- Try replacing water with chicken or beef broth to provide calories until the appetite returns.
- Offer canned dog food or baby food to entice your dog's appetite.
- Offer their food warmed and or by hand. Be careful of the temperature before serving.
- Remember your dog's appetite may be decreased the first day or two after surgery.

#### **My dog is vomiting since returning home. Why? What can I do?**

- Causes and treatments of vomiting after surgery:
  - Your dog may be taking in large amounts of water at one time and then vomiting. If this is the case, please offer your dog smaller, more frequent amounts of water for the first few days.
  - Medications such as antibiotics or pain medications may cause nausea and result in vomiting. In order to discover which medication may be causing this problem, separate them by about two hours. Normally your dog will appear nauseated within one hour of administering the medication. After you have narrowed down which medication it may be, please call our office and we may change or discontinue the medication.
  - Try offering the medications in a small amount of food.
  - Nausea may be a result of the anesthesia and should pass in a few days.
  - If your dog has had abdominal surgery or the vomiting persists more than 36 hours, PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY!
- What can I do for my dog if they are vomiting?
  - Withhold any food or water for 12-24 hours. Start with only small, frequent amounts of water then food. We recommend a bland diet of lean cooked hamburger or chicken over rice or mashed potatoes. You may also give your pet Pepcid AC<sup>®</sup>, normal adult dose, twice daily, to help reduce the acidity of the stomach. If your pet continues to vomit or becomes decreasingly depressed, PLEASE CALL OUR OFFICE IMMEDIATELY!

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

- Signs of pain include:
  - Crying
  - Biting at the surgical site
  - Anxiousness
  - Restlessness and not wanting to sleep or lie down, or continual pacing
  - Quiet or reclusive behavior
- The worst pain is normally for the first 2-4 days.

**Are there any medications I can give at home if my dog seems to be in pain?**

- **IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU DO NOT GIVE ANY OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATIONS TO YOUR DOG FOR PAIN. MANY OVER THE COUNTER MEDICATIONS MAY HAVE HARMFUL SIDE EFFECTS WHEN GIVEN WITH THE MEDICATIONS YOUR DOG HAS BEEN PRESCRIBED. Please call our office if the medications we have provided you are not helping, we can prescribe stronger medications if needed.**
- Applying a warm or cold compress to the incision may reduce the pain and swelling.

**Is it ok if I allow my dog to lick the incision?**

- No. When a dog licks their incision, it delays the healing process by traumatizing the area. Also, bacteria from their mouth may infect the incision area.
- Licking may remove the sutures and open the incision, increasing the risk for infection.
- Dogs frequently lick at their incision the moment you are not looking, no matter how short a time! If the skin is red or irritated, this normally means your dog has been licking.

**How do I stop my dog from licking?**

- Collars, such as the Elizabethan collar, work best by providing a barrier between your dog's mouth and their incision.
- If the incision is over the chest or abdomen, an old t-shirt may be worn.
- In cases of hind end or lower abdomen surgeries, a pair of cotton boxers can be worn.
- Bitter Apple<sup>®</sup> or similar product may be placed AROUND the incision, not directly on the incision. However, this does not deter some dogs.