

The first few days at home after outpatient surgery...

THAT FIRST NIGHT AT HOME...

Recovering from anesthesia after surgery is a very individual process; different animals responded differently. Some of the more common behaviors you may see your pet display are:

- “Glassy eyed” staring and inability to focus on you or your voice;
- Pacing and inability to settle and lie down to rest;
- Whining and vocalizing in a continuous manner with little change associated with comforting by you.

To the inexperienced eye, these behaviors may seem like pain and suffering; most commonly they actually are related to the pain-relieving medications we use during and after anesthesia (i.e. narcotics, like morphine). The behaviors are called “dysphoria” and while difficult to watch, they are related to the opposite of pain. We tailor our pain management plans to an animal’s body weight and type of surgery, but each patient will experience these drugs with different levels of dysphoria. This state will subside as the medications level out and work through their system over several hours. Please contact the veterinary clinic where anesthesia was performed for guidance through postoperative behaviors that exceed these expectations.

PAIN AND THE POSTOPERATIVE EXPERIENCE

The chief concern expressed by all pet owners is that their pet not suffer. This is our goal too. We work hard to tailor medications to the patient, to eliminate stress and anxiety during the surgical experience, to reduce surgical trauma using the least invasive methods, and to provide you with appropriate restrictions to avoid additional injury. Surgery will carry some degree of pain in the immediate postoperative period, but we are confident our protocols will maintain this at a very low level for a short period of time.

During the first one to two days postoperatively, your pet will need a lot of assistance and supervision from you. The anesthesia pain medications are wearing off, and the oral pain medications are ramping up. They will want to sleep a lot; this is OK. Do not expect them to be their chipper selves; they need rest, and the medications will continue to make them sleepy for several days. If your pet is able to eat and drink and navigate outside to urinate/defecate with assistance in the first two days, then sleeping and resting for the rest of the day is OK. Please contact the veterinary clinic where anesthesia was performed for guidance through postoperative immobility and sedation that exceeds these expectations.

YOU ARE THEIR EYES AND VOICE

We trust you to be your pet’s advocate to us. You can relay to us what you are seeing, and we can help interpret what those signs mean. Try hard to accurately describe your pet’s signs. To simply state, “She is in pain!”, we run the risk of over medicating a situation that is actually the dysphoria discussed above. Give us the description of what you see your pet doing. “Whining”, “Biting at surgery site”, “Pacing”, “Vomiting”, “Hiding”. We will ask questions geared toward these descriptions. These observed behaviors will allow us to better interpret the situation and guide you through it.

Please allow us to help you through these first few days. Ask what to expect, read instructions provided, monitor your pet’s signs, support your pet at home, contact us when something doesn’t seem right. We do this every day; you are jumping in head first! We will help you and your pet through it.

Additional resources: www.directvetsurg.com