

Urethrostomy



One of the most useful and efficient ways to convey information to you about your pet is via the written word. We carefully craft these notes to give you helpful information and accurate expectations around your pet's surgical experience.

Please read this. *Please save it and read it during each stage of the recovery process.* Surprises make for a stressful time for everyone.

Photo and video examples may be found on our website: www.directvetsurg.com in the Pet Owner Portal under "DVS Resources".

Your pet has had a urethrostomy performed to create a new, permanent opening in the urethra and remove abnormal tissues or stones. This procedure creates an opening in the urethra above and usually larger than the normal opening; the remaining length of "unused" urethra may or may not have been removed. The urethra heals very rapidly, but can also heal with excessive scarring and tissue formation (called granulation tissue.) It is important to prevent your pet from traumatizing (i.e. excessive licking/chewing) the new urethral opening during the healing phase to reduce the chance of these complications. After urethral surgery, the inflammation created by the incisions and manipulation will make your pet feel like he/she has to urinate frequently; this will subside over the next week or so. Once the new opening has matured, in approximately 6 weeks, complications are rare.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Please keep a note of your questions as you and your pet progress thru recovery and address them to your primary care veterinary team. Our surgery group will contact your primary care team on **Day 2** (after their phone follow-up with you) and **Day 14** (after your recheck visit with them) to check in on your pet's progress and see if you have had any concerns or questions. This method will maintain continuity in care and an accurate patient medical record.

First few days postop

MONITORING

Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe, indoor location without free access to stairs for the next 24 hours as he/she recovers from anesthesia and surgery.

Your pet may be groggy for the next few days. He or she may whine or appear more anxious than usual; this may indicate pain/discomfort or side-effects of the medications. Please call your primary care veterinary team for assistance with medication adjustments or return for exam and additional pain medications as needed.

Monitor appetite and attitude. *If both do not steadily improve over the next 2-3 days*, please call your primary care veterinary team or return for progress evaluation and problem-solving.

You can expect your pet to have a bowel movement within 5 days. Some animals take longer than others depending on when they last ate prior to surgery and when they started eating after surgery. It may be abnormal in color and consistency for 2-3 days. If you have any concerns, please speak with your primary care veterinary team.

Please confirm that your pet has urinated within 24 hours of returning home. If he/she does not, or you notice any problems related to urination, please speak with your primary care veterinary team.

Closely supervise your pet's movements over the first 3-4 days when s/he will be groggy from anesthetics and pain medications. Limit activities to necessary events only (on leash/out to go to the bathroom; access to food/water.)

You can expect your pet to have urgency to urinate frequently, a tendency to strain to urinate, and to have blood-tinged urine for 1-2 weeks. Please allow frequent access their routine "bathroom" location to urinate.

If your pet has accidents in the house, please understand that he/she likely could not prevent it during this recovery period—have patience. If this increased frequency, straining or bloody urine continues beyond 2 weeks, please return to your primary care veterinarian for evaluation.

LITTERBOX MODIFICATIONS (for cats)

All litterboxes in your home should be emptied of litter and washed before your cat comes home. Only shredded paper (or paper "pellet-style" litter; i.e. *Yesterday's News*) should be used for 2 weeks. The clay-type and clumping-type litter contains dust that can contaminate the surgery site. It may be necessary to avoid the clay and clumping litter long-term if it collects on the area around the new urethral opening.

Please empty the litterboxes frequently during this recovery period to encourage your cat to use them frequently.

MEDICATIONS

It is likely that you have been prescribed one or more medications (given by mouth) for your pet over the first 2-3wks of recovery. During the discharge appointment or shortly thereafter, please make sure you understand:

- what each medication is being used to treat,
- what side-effects may develop, and
- whether or not the medication should be refilled and continued.

Week 1-2 postop

MONITORING

Please look at the incision twice daily. It will look very red and there may be blood clots or crusts on the incision; do not clean or disturb the incision. The newly exposed urethra needs time to adjust to being opened and exposed; the redness will subside. The size of the new opening will shrink to 1/3 to 1/2 of its immediate post-surgical size over the next 6 weeks.

Problems to call your veterinarian about:

- gapping of the incision or tissue protruding from incision;
- discharge (other than small amount of crusting);
- bruising and swelling that extends down the back legs and groin;
- inability to pass urine over a 12 hour period.

****Please call and return for a progress exam immediately (or go to an emergency hospital if overnight or weekends) if you notice these problems. They may indicate urine leakage under the incision; the earlier we catch leaking, the easier it is to treat this potentially life-threatening complication.****

It is very important that your pet does not lick or chew the incision excessively until it is well healed; they can severely traumatize the new opening or compromise healing. Pets tend to want to lick early in the healing period. If necessary, please prevent access to the incision by using creative clothing options (ex. backward long-sleeved T-shirt worn as

“pants”), an E-collar or other devices, if you must leave your pet unattended. See www.directvetsurg.com, Pet Owner portal→Pet Links and DVS Resources

If urine is collecting on the skin or fur around the new opening during urination, you may apply a thin film of ointment around the incision to prevent skin irritation from the urine (i.e. Desitin ointment, A&D ointment, Neosporin ointment, Vaseline). Do not apply to incision. As the incision heals, urination will be better controlled and this will be less of a problem.

TEST PENDING

If there were any stones removed, they will be submitted for analysis of their composition. Specific dietary modifications and therapy recommendations will be determined from this result. Your veterinarian will contact you with stone results in 2-4 weeks and will make any treatment changes as needed.

If there were any biopsy or culture samples removed for testing, they will be submitted and results usually will be available in 5-7 days. Your primary care team will contact you with test results and make any treatment changes as needed.

PROGRESS EXAMS

Please return to your primary care veterinarian in 7-10 days for a progress exam. Healing of the new urethral opening will be evaluated, sutures (if present) will be removed, and any questions you have or tests needing follow-up will be addressed. **If you think your pet will not allow stitches to be removed from this very sensitive location, please contact your primary care veterinary team a week before your progress exam to pick up oral tranquilizer/sedatives to make the visit less stressful for your pet.

DIET

(If stones were removed...) Until stone analysis results are returned, please follow the following general recommendations:

- Encourage water consumption. Provide easy access to fresh water daily. Add water to food daily.
- Avoid any dietary supplements (i.e. vitamins, etc.) or edible treats (i.e. biscuits, rawhide, etc.)

RESTRICTIONS

Avoid any rigorous activity for 2 weeks; no running, jumping, playing or anything that feels like “exercise”. For dogs, short, leashed walks around the yard to urinate/defecate are fine. Walking around one level of the house is fine. Prevent all pets from jumping up and down from furniture, etc. A bad landing or an awkward take-off can result in serious repercussions.

For dogs, please use a short (~6ft), hand-held leash when outside to urinate/defecate. Confine your pet to a small area/room/crate when unattended. Please do not allow your pet to run, jump or play during this restriction period.

Long-term lifestyle

Pets with a permanent urethrostomy rarely have long term difficulty with urination. Sometimes male dogs may soil the inside of their legs when urinating if their stream is directed poorly. Pay close attention to the area around the new opening for the first 2 months to make sure moisture is not accumulating.

It is recommended to keep the hair around the new opening trimmed close to prevent matting and soiling, especially in male cats. A small electric trimmer (like those used to trim mustaches and beards) can be helpful; trim every 2-3 months as needed to prevent problems.

Excessive scarring or “stricture” may develop many months after surgery and require further evaluation and treatment. If you notice smaller than normal pools of urine, a weak urine stream or excessive straining to urinate, please have your pet evaluated by your veterinarian.

Because the new urethrostomy is bypassing normal urethra that usually acts as a barrier to bacteria, pets with permanent urethrostomies are at higher risk for bladder infections. Your primary care veterinarian may recommend a routine for urine testing depending on your pet’s circumstances. Signs to look for that suggest bladder infection include: increased frequency of urination, an urgency to urinate, straining to urinate (i.e. squatting longer than usual), blood in the urine, excessive licking of the new urethral opening. Consult your primary care veterinarian if you notice these signs.

Checklist:

HOME MONITORING AND PROGRESS CHECK-IN WITH VETERINARY TEAM

- ☐ Pet attitude and appetite—Are these improving daily? What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
- ☐ Pet mobility—Is this improving daily? What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
- ☐ Incision health—Is redness and swelling going away? Is there discharge or moisture? (Photos taken close-up and at different angles are helpful for your primary care veterinary team.)
- ☐ Pet pain level—What are your observations? What are your specific concerns?
- ☐ Other

Based on your own experience through this, we welcome and encourage suggestions to this information that may help future patients and their people. Pay it forward! (directvetsurg@gmail.com)

--The DVS Crew