

My Written Plan for “Go to the ER/ICU now with my convalescing pet”

You are currently managing your pet through a major medical illness or injury using the Secondary Care model—working closely with your primary veterinary team and various specialists while supporting your pet’s care yourself at home after-hours. The information and template below will help guide and prepare you should your pet’s medical status change while s/he is home with you overnight or on the weekends at any stage during convalescence.

WHAT SHOULD I HAVE PREPARED AHEAD OF TIME WHEN I KNOW I AM MANAGING MY PET THROUGH CONVALESCENCE AT HOME?

- Directions and phone number for ER closest to your home**

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| Clinic: |
| Address: |
| Phone: |

- Ability to move your pet**

- Pet carrier/pillowcase
- Stretcher/blanket
- Assistance—who will help you put your pet in the car, who will come with you?

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|-----------------------|
| Name: |
| Phone numbers: |
| Name: |
| Phone numbers: |

- Up to date medical summary, in writing**

Please discuss this with your veterinary team ***EACH time you pick up your pet*** for at-home monitoring and basic home medical care overnight with you.)

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|--|
| Date: |
| Diagnosis: |
| Surgical procedure: |
| Vital signs and Ins/Outs (each time checking out at Primary Care Clinic): |

Medication summary

Please keep a chart and **update it every time new medications are added or removed** from the chart.

Your well-considered plan for emergency life-saving decisions, quality-of-life decisions and financial decisions. By definition, this ER visit will be during an emergency and highly stressful; think practically ahead of time about what life-saving measures and financial costs you will authorize.

- Will my pet need oxygen or breathing support?
- Will my pet need ongoing hospitalization?
- Will my pet need CPR and other life-saving treatments?

SHOULD I CALL THE ER/ICU FACILITY FOR GUIDANCE?

Call and alert them of your arrival and for what reason.

It is unlikely that significant guidance can be provided over the phone by ER staff; it is usually medically necessary for your pet to be examined and her/his medical summary reviewed before safe and appropriate care can be recommended. **Please set your expectations for the need for an in-person visit** should you be concerned for your pet's welfare overnight.

WHAT ABNORMALITIES SHOULD SEND ME TO THE ER?

- Excessive pain that is inconsolable (see below)
- Dangerous vital signs (see below)
- Repeated vomiting x 12hrs
- No eating/drinking ("ins") x 24hrs
- No urine ("outs") x 24hrs

WHAT ARE MY PET'S NORMAL VITAL SIGNS?

Learn how to collect vital signs—(***ask for a demonstration from your veterinary care team***)

Heart rate: *Too high is usually the concern.*

Small dog/cat (up to 30lbs)

Heart rate—80-150 beats per minute

Large dog (over 30lbs)

Heart rate—40-100 beats per minute

Breathing rate and effort: *Too high and visible effort is usually the concern.*

Breathing rate—6-20 breaths per minute

Breathing effort—mouth closed, no effort. Panting can be normal or abnormal for dogs; abnormal for cats.

Temperature: *Both too low and too high are of concern.*
100.5 – 102.5F

Color: *Check both gum color and tongue color*
Gums = light pink
Tongue = dark pink

Dangerous vital signs:

Breathing effort—combination of the following,

- *mouth open (cats especially)*
- *lips pulling back with effort*
- *abdomen sucking in with effort*
- *“Darth Vader” noise*
- *squeaking noise*

Temperature—*less than 99F or more than 104F*

Color—*white gums or purple-tinged tongue*

Anesthesia recovery signs:

- Glassy, unfocused eyes
- Repetitive whine
- Poor recognition of owner by voice or sight
- Inability to “settle” (stand up, lie down, pace)
- Panting, dry mouth, poor tongue function (can’t lick)
- Trembling/shivering

Pain signs:

All individuals respond differently to pain and not all pain is suffering. Knowing what signs from your pet are pain responses and which pain to seek help with, will be the most challenging aspect of your job. Knowing how to help your painful pet without your pet causing **you** major bodily injury (bite wounds), will be the second hardest part.

To help your pet during a major recovery, this monitoring job will require you to be objective and practical as well as compassionate. It won’t be easy; it will be frustrating.

- Crying out or protecting when a body part is touched/moved
- Grimace on face
- Hissing, growling, snapping
- Not moving/getting up, hiding or curled up

- Limping or holding leg up
- Shaking
- Lying awkwardly
- Won't lie down or sleep
- Not eating/drinking

You will notice that pain signs can be the same as anesthesia recovery signs. Sometimes professional help is needed to work through your pet's condition, medications, and medical history to best determine pain status and necessary management.

Contact information for my primary care veterinary doctor and clinic

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| Veterinarian: |
| Clinic: |
| Email: |
| Phone: |