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## Pectus excavatum

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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](http://www.directvetsurg.com) in the Pet Owner Portal under "DVS Resources".

Your pet has had a surgical splint applied to the chest abnormality called Pectus Excavatum. The splint is surgically "tied" to the chest wall (sternum and ribs) with sutures to pull the bones outward to a more normal shape. The splint will stay in place as the bones mature into normal position. In the majority of patients, once the splint is removed and the chest healed, there will not be any restrictions on the lifestyle for your pet.

### First few days postop

#### 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.

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 breathing several times daily. Count your pet's breathing rate (breaths per minute) when first home and resting. Use that as a baseline for comparison. If the rate goes up steadily (and does not settle down over 5 minutes after activity) or breathing effort is difficult or appears distressing, please seek veterinary care from your primary care veterinarian or emergency clinic after business hours.

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.

## 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**

### BANDAGE CARE

A wrap has been applied to cover the chest splint that is sutured in place on the chest wall. The wrap is there to keep the splint from sliding out of position or rubbing the skin too much.

Twice daily, run your finger around the edges of the wrap/splint to check for skin irritation or interference with leg movement. Contact or return to your primary care clinic if any abnormalities are noted.

The wrap/splint will remain in place for \_\_\_\_\_ **weeks total**; please return to your primary care veterinarian every 5-7 days to have the wrap changed and the splint evaluated. The suture ties holding the chest to the splint may need to be tightened with your pet under sedation at one or more times during the healing period.

### PROGRESS EXAMS

Please return to your primary care clinic in 5-7 days for a progress exam and wrap change.

The splint will be removed under light sedation in approximately \_\_\_\_\_ weeks.

## RESTRICTIONS

Avoid any rigorous activity for 4 weeks. For puppies, short trips outside to urinate/defecate are fine.

No access to stairs is recommended during restricted period. Confine your pet to a small space (bathroom, baby playpen, dog crate, etc.) to minimize activity. Provide easy access to food and water (and litter pans for kittens.) Carry puppies whenever possible to and from outdoor bathroom breaks.

Please do not allow your pet to run, jump or play during this restriction period.

## Longterm lifestyle

If successful chest wall reconstruction was achieved and no other abnormalities exist, there are no predicted limitations to your pet's lifestyle.

## 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](mailto:directvetsurg@gmail.com))

--The DVS Crew