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## Tumor removal

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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 tumor removed that was growing/expanding under the skin. These tumors are "neoplastic" tissues or a large group of cells of normal tissues that have become abnormal and unregulated and have started multiplying and growing. These tumors are the solid structure created by this abnormal tissue growth. Surgery was performed to remove the tumor and reduce the chance the tumor re-grows at this same site. A laboratory test, called a "biopsy" is necessary to describe the type of tumor (i.e. which cell type has become abnormal), characterize the behavior of the tumor (i.e. is it slow or aggressive; often called "grading"), and evaluate the surgical margins for microscopic "fingers" of tumor cells that may remain at the surgery site.

### 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.

## 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.

## BANDAGE CARE (IF PRESENT)

A clear, plastic bandaid may have been applied to the incision (Tegaderm). This will protect the incision from infection from the environment and a wayward pet tongue! It is useful for up to 2-3 days. You may remove it like a “bandaid” at any time.

A “tie-over/bolster bandage” may have been applied to protect and support the surgical incision. This roll of cotton material is sutured over the incision to apply compression and stretch the surrounding skin toward the incision; both of these effects improve healing of incisions created during the removal of a large portion of skin and underlying tissues.

A foot or leg bandage may have been applied to protect and support the surgical incision. Since this bandage touches the ground, it can be soiled or wet from surface contact (even

morning dew will soak through a bandage quickly.) When outside, please cover the end of the bandage with plastic baggie or equivalent to prevent this; remove when indoors. If the end of the bandage is open, check the two central toenails twice daily (i.e. look at or feel them). They should be close together. If they are spreading apart, this indicates toe swelling which can result in serious complications, and the bandage needs to be assessed by a veterinarian within 4-6 hours. Please call if any swelling is noted.

If the bandage gets wet or you notice any bad odor coming from the bandage, it will need to be evaluated within 4-6 hours; serious skin problems may develop.

We strongly advised that you do not modify the bandage in any way. Adding tape or other wrappings can seriously compromise the safety of the bandage/splint. If you are concerned about the security or integrity of the bandage, please return for re-evaluation and reapplication as needed.

Check the bandage daily for problems—look at/feel all edges where the bandage is close to the skin; if on the leg/foot, check toes for swelling/nails spreading apart; confirm it is in the same position as postoperatively; evaluate for wetness or damage. *If any changes or concerns, please take a photo and email to your primary care veterinary team with questions/concerns and ask for guidance.*

## **Week 1-2 postop**

### MONITORING

Please look at the incision twice daily (if visible). It should be dry, slightly red along the margins, slightly swollen/thick on the edges with a light crust down the center. Over several days, it should lose redness and swelling.

Problems to call your veterinarian about:

- gapping (the edges should be exactly touching)
- ongoing or new discharge (other than small amount of crusting)
- swelling (other than slightly raised skin near edges).

Some bruising is normal and will resolve in 5-7 days.

The occasional patient will have more extensive bruising on day 2-3. If this develops, please let your primary care veterinarian know; a visit or sending photos will help them characterize the issue and decide on a course of action. The vast majority of the time, this is a transient issue that will follow a typical 5-7 day course resolving.

*If any changes or concerns, please take a good photo and/or videoclip and email to your primary care veterinary team with questions/concerns and ask for guidance.*

Do not allow your pet to lick or chew the incision. Pets tend to want to lick early in the healing period and scratch later in the healing period; this can compromise the incision and predispose to infection. If necessary, please prevent access to the incision by using creative clothing options (backward long-sleeved T-shirt worn as “pants”; a one-sie baby outfit as a bodysuit), an E-collar or other devices, if you must leave your pet unattended.

See [www.directvetsurg.com](http://www.directvetsurg.com), Pet Owner portal → Pet Links and DVS Resources

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.)

#### TEST PENDING

If there were any 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

If a “tie-over/bolster bandage” or leg/foot bandage has been applied, this will need to be removed by your primary care veterinary team in 3 days. Prevent your pet from disturbing this supportive bandage by using some form of cover-up clothing or an E-collar.

Please return to your primary care clinic in 10-14 days for a progress exam. Skin healing will be evaluated, sutures (if present) will be removed, and any questions you have will be addressed. (Alternatively, you can schedule a remote progress exam to include a photo of the incision. Include a brief summary for the veterinary team and any questions you have.)

Surgical incision complications are a common problem after the removal of large tumors or tumors from areas with lots of motion (i.e. legs, tail, head). Careful monitoring will detect impending problems and allow for timely corrective action. A dry incision is a

happy incision; moisture or drainage are the most common early warning signs. Please contact your primary care veterinary team if you have any concerns.

## RESTRICTIONS

Avoid any rigorous activity **for 4 weeks or until the surgery site is healed and normal**. For dogs, short, leashed walks to urinate/defecate are fine. For cats, confine to one room or one level of the house.

Minimal, supervised/assisted access to stairs is recommended during restricted period. Use baby gates, etc. to prevent free access to stairs during this restricted period. When navigating stairs (up and down), have a hand/leash on collar/harness and ideally a sling/strap under the belly to prevent slips, stumbles, falls.

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.

If your pet's personality-type challenges these restrictions, discuss options for medicinal-assistance for your pet to make restrictions easier to manage (i.e. Trazadone, Gabapentin, Tramadol, other).

## Long-term lifestyle

The prognosis for patients who have had a tumor removed is completely dependent upon what type of tumor was removed. Some tumors will be completely treated with surgery, some will regrow where they were removed, and some tumors will spread via the lymph nodes or blood vessels to distant organs. Biopsy information is used to understand this potential risk and to guide recommendations for monitoring and future treatment. Please confirm you know what and how to monitor based on the biopsy test results.

## **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