



## Spaying and Neutering

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### Why spay or neuter?

There are numerous benefits of spaying and neutering in our pets including:

- Prevention of unwanted litters.
- Protection against several serious health problems:
  - Females: life-threatening uterine infections, breast cancer.
  - Males: enlarged prostate (benign prostatic hyperplasia), prostate infections, testicular cancer.
- Reduction in many behavioral problems associated with the mating instinct.
- Eliminating heat cycles in females, as well as the associated behaviors.
- Reduction in breeding instinct in male dogs, making them less inclined to roam.

### What are the risks of spaying and neutering?

Removal of the reproductive hormones can sometimes result in increased risk of health problems such as urinary incontinence and some types of cancer. Talk to your veterinarian about the benefits and risks of the sterilization procedure so you can make an informed decision.

While both spaying and neutering are major surgical procedures, they are the most common surgeries performed by veterinarians. There is always inherent risk associated with anesthesia and surgery, though the overall incidence of complications is very low.

### The Steps of an Anesthetic Procedure

Most of us are anxious about going under anesthesia ourselves, so it's understandable to be anxious about your pet being anesthetized. Anesthesia for animals has come a long way and is safer than it ever was before, and a well-trained veterinary team further reduces your pet's risk. While complications can occur, the veterinary team will take all of the necessary precautions to ensure that your pet is safe.

### Before Anesthesia

Prior to receiving anesthesia, your veterinarian will perform a thorough physical exam on your pet, review your pet's medical history and discuss any risk factors. Your veterinarian will also perform blood tests on your pet to check for any indications of a developing medical problem or anesthetic risk. If you have any questions about your pet's health or his or her anesthetic risk, ask your veterinarian for an explanation that will help you make an educated decision.



Prior to general anesthesia, your pet will be given a pre-anesthetic sedative to reduce his or her stress and ease the process. An intravenous catheter is placed to allow administration of fluids (to keep your pet hydrated) and medications (to help with comfort, reducing risk of infection, etc). The anesthetic may be delivered by gas inhalation (using a gas anesthesia machine), intravenously, or a combination of both.

### During Anesthesia

While under anesthesia, your pet will receive monitoring and care comparable to what you'd receive if you underwent anesthesia. This may include intravenous fluids and/or medications to support your pet's circulation and blood pressure; an endotracheal tube inserted into your pet's trachea (windpipe) to deliver the anesthetic gas and provide oxygen to your pet's lungs; pulse oximetry to measure the oxygenation of your pet's blood; blood pressure monitoring; temperature monitoring and warming blankets to prevent hypothermia (low body temperature); and electrocardiography (ECG, also called EKG) to monitor your pet's heart rate and rhythm.

### After Anesthesia

Once the procedure is finished and it's time for your pet to wake up from the anesthesia, your pet will be placed in a quiet, semi-dark cage or kennel to recover. A technician remains with your pets during this time, closely monitoring them to ensure that they are recovering normally. Pads and blankets are used to keep your pet warm during the recovery. Some pets may also vocalize (whine, bark or meow) during recovery; if this occurs, the patient's comfort will be re-assessed and addressed if needed. The endotracheal tube is removed when your pet is awake enough to swallow normally. Fluids and/or medications may be continued through recovery, depending on your pet's condition and comfort.

We will call when your pet is recovering from anesthesia to discuss the procedure, and how your pet is doing. We will then determine a time for your pet to be discharged from the hospital, and we will go through all of the at-home care instructions and follow-up.

### **What Can You Do to Reduce Your Pet's Risk?**

- Let your veterinarian know if your pet has ever had a reaction to sedation or anesthesia.
- Make sure your veterinarian is aware of all medications and supplements (including over-the-counter products) your pet is receiving.
- Keep your pet healthy with regular preventive care.
- Keep your pet at a healthy weight.
- Take steps to prevent injuries to your pet whenever possible (avoiding emergencies that may require anesthesia).
- Follow your veterinarian's instructions before anesthesia, especially with regards to withholding food and/or water.
- Follow your veterinarian's instructions regarding any medications you should - or should not - give to your pet prior to anesthesia.