

# Monroe Veterinary Associates

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## Post-Surgical Home Care

### ACTIVITY

Generally it is advised that you limit your pet's activity until sutures or staples are removed, or until your veterinarian gives the green light for normal activity to begin. For most canine patients, limited leash walking is permissible.

- Do not allow your pet to jump or run
- Do not allow your pet to play with other pets; NO ROUGH-HOUSING
- Avoiding bathing and swimming until sutures/staples are removed

*For surgical patients that need complete bed rest:*

- Absolutely no exercise of any kind (except to go outside to go to the bathroom on leash)
- Avoiding the use of stairs

Examples of procedures where complete *bed rest* might be advised include major abdominal surgeries and major orthopedic surgeries, including spinal surgeries.

*The Golden Rule:*

A good rule of thumb is asking yourself, what would my doctor allow me to do if I had a similar operation? We encourage clients to check with their veterinarian for any limitations after a surgical procedure.

### FOOD/WATER

If your pet has had a surgical procedure and is allowed home on the same day, we suggest that you let your pet acclimate back into the home environment for about a half an hour or so before offering any water. Sometime pets become overly excited upon returning home and tend to drink too much water at one time and then proceed to vomit.

As far as eating is concerned, if your pet had a minor procedure involving local anesthesia, a general rule of thumb is that they may resume their normal meal schedule once home. If, however, your pet had a general anesthetic procedure on the same day returning home, it probably would be wise to offer just a small snack several hours after returning home. If your pet does not seem interested, just wait until the next day to resume the normal feeding schedule. Exceptions to these general rules might occur if your pet has had intestinal or esophageal surgery, in which case your veterinarian will specify what to feed as well as the feeding frequency.

### OBSERVE THE INCISION DAILY

Check the incision each day for swelling, discharge, redness, excessive licking or missing sutures. Please notify the doctor if you have any concerns. Protective collars are available to keep your pet from bothering the incision. Incisions that become infected may require further hospitalization and surgery.

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## **MEDICATION**

Post-Surgical medication often involves antibiotics and/or pain medications. Some medications need to be taken with food, while others should be taken on an empty stomach. Please check the label on your pet's medication vial for specific instructions on how to give the medicine as well as the frequency (how often) to give the medication.

Just as with people, not every medication will agree with every patient. Notify your veterinarian immediately if your pet develops vomiting or diarrhea or loss of appetite. Sometimes medication reactions can cause these symptoms.

## **FENTANYL PATCH**

Sometimes these patches are applied to patient's skin when an additional morphine-like pain medication called *fentanyl* is needed after some surgical procedures. The medicine is absorbed through the skin and into the bloodstream.

### ***What if my pet is taking other medications?***

It is important to let your doctor know if your pet is receiving any other medications since they may interfere with the fentanyl. Some medications can negate the effects of the fentanyl; others may intensify the effects. Please provide your doctor with a list of all medications (prescribed or over the counter) that you are currently giving your pet.

### ***How can I expect my pet to respond to the fentanyl patch?***

The normal reaction to a fentanyl patch is relaxation, however some pets will seem anxious or agitated. This is particularly true of the first night after your pet returns home, as the excitement of returning home is exacerbated by the dysphoria of the narcotic, fentanyl. This will resolve within a day of being home.

Infrequently, pets may be 'sensitive' to the fentanyl. If your pet seems unresponsive or has any difficulty breathing, please call your doctor.

### ***What should I avoid when my pet has a fentanyl patch?***

Do not allow your pet to lick or chew the fentanyl patch. If necessary an Elizabethan collar may need to be applied to prevent this from happening.

Heat may increase the amount of medication that is absorbed through the skin of your pet from the patch. Do not use hot water bottles, electric blankets, heating pads or other sources of direct heat on the patch.

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### ***What should I do if the patch falls off?***

If the patch falls off, discard it by folding it in half so that the adhesive surface sticks to itself and flush it down the toilet immediately. Avoid contact with the adhesive surface of the patch as it may contain medication that could be absorbed through your skin.

### ***When and how should I remove the patch?***

The patch can be removed 3 to 5 days after it is applied. To remove: hold the skin in front of the patch steady and pull the patch off sharply in the direction of hair growth. The patch can be very adherent. If you are uncomfortable removing the patch, please return to the hospital and one of our technicians can do this for you.

**Important: Keep the fentanyl patch out of the reach of children!**

## **BANDAGE, SPLINT & CAST CARE**

### *Bandage, splint & cast essentials*

Please keep the bandage clean and dry. A heavy duty plastic bag should be placed over the end of the bandage when your pet goes outside. The plastic bag should never be left on for more than 30 minutes at a time. Examine the bottom of the bandage daily for discharge or a foul odor. If the bandage has an open end, insert your finger to check the toes for swelling, drainage or if they feel cold to the touch. If you notice any of these, or if the bandage becomes wet or soiled, or if it appears to be slipping from its original position **THE BANDAGE MUST BE RECHECKED/CHANGED** by a doctor promptly.

### *Moving & Cruising*

Please follow the exercise restrictions given to you by your veterinarian. Generally it is advised to keep your pet quiet. No running, jumping or strenuous activity should be allowed. Walks should be kept short and slow. Dogs should be kept on a leash when outside. Your pet will not be as mobile as usual, and you will need to protect your pet from additional injury (falling off furniture, down stairs or slipping while walking). When your pet must walk on stairs or slippery surfaces, you can provide additional support by placing a towel or sling under his/her belly. You don't need to carry the weight of the pet, just provide a safety net. When your pet is not under direct, responsible adult supervision, please make sure your pet is confined to a crate or similarly restricted space.

Be certain to schedule your follow-up appointment. Leaving a bandage, splint or cast on too long can result in serious skin infections or even impede your pet's return to normal mobility!