

The Road to Recovery

Information to help your pet recover from surgery.



Surgical Risks

Marian Benitez
DVM, MS, DACVS-SA

980-257-4247
benitezm@dogwoodveterinarysurgery.com

Each and every procedure (minor or major) can experience complications. These will be addressed with the surgeon prior to each procedure, but some are included here for your reference.

Patient:

Surgery Date:

Referring Hospital:

Local ER Contact:

General Risks

- General anesthetic risks
- Life-threatening cardiorespiratory arrest
- Incisional breakdown and separation
- Incisional infection
- Incisional swelling (seroma)
- Recurrence of disease (if applicable)
- Bleeding

TPLO-Specific Risks

- All of the above
- Subsequent meniscal injury
- Tibial tuberosity fracture
- Patellar ligament desmitis

Orthopedic-Specific Risks

- Delayed bone healing or non-healing bone
- Malunion bone healing (mal-alignment)
- Implant failure (pin migration, screw pullout, plate breakage or failure)
- Implant or bone infection (osteomyelitis)
- Bone fracture
- Patellar luxation
- Pivot shift
- Risk contralateral cranial cruciate ligament rupture within 1-2 years

Overnight Care

Direct all urgent concerns to your veterinarian or local emergency room.

The first 24 to 48 hours home:

It is likely that your pet will be very tired from his/her surgery and hospitalization. Your pet should be kept in a safe, quiet and warm confined space or crate with access to drinking water. Surgical pain will be at its highest during this time so be sure to administer pain medications as directed. Sedation may be necessary to keep your pet quiet during the recovery period. If you believe your pet would benefit from a sedative, please contact your veterinarian.

Monitor urination and defecation:

It is common for the gastrointestinal tract to slow down after recent anesthesia and surgery. Pain medications will also slow the gastrointestinal tract. Do not worry if your pet has not defecated once going home from the hospital. It may take a few days for the GI tract to normalize post-operatively. If there is excessive straining to urinate or defecate without production, please contact your local veterinarian for additional recommendations. If your pet received an epidural for pain control, please monitor your pet's ability to urinate at home. If your pet has not urinated in 12-24 hours or is straining or posturing without production, please contact your veterinarian or local emergency room.

Immediate appetite loss:

Your pet's appetite may be decreased for the next 24-36 hours. Do not be alarmed if there is no interest in food. If this habit lingers, or your pet experiences vomiting and excessive salivation, please contact your veterinarian.

Medications:

Give your pet's medications as directed by your veterinarian. Additional pain medications warrant an additional recheck visit by your veterinarian prior to prescribing more pain pills. Sedation can be given if needed depending on your pet's condition in recovery.

Orthopedic Recovery

Recovering from Orthopedic Surgery

Please follow the below instructions for a successful recovery. Any additional instructions to your pet's specific procedure may be included separately or will be discussed at time of discharge from the hospital. In general, the recovery period is around 8-10 weeks. Each patient is unique and circumstances will vary from one pet to the next.

Incisions

Please monitor each incision for any excessive redness, swelling, discharge or separation of the surgical site.

DO NOT, for any reason, allow your pet to lick, chew or groom the surgical site. An e-collar should be purchased and kept on your pet at all times to keep from damaging the surgical site.

Unless otherwise directed, use ice compression for 5-10 minutes (as tolerated) 3-4 times a day for the first 24-36 hours. After which, use warm compression 5-10 minutes (as tolerated) 3-4 times a day until for the next 24-48 hours until swelling subsides. You should always use a towel or barrier against the skin to prevent thermal damage and always check the temperature on your skin first.

It is not uncommon to see bruising and swelling dissipate around the ankle or wrist (lower joints) after surgery. Please see instructions for warm compression and Passive Range of Motion (pROM).

NO BATHS throughout the recovery period or until approved by a veterinarian. We do not want your pet climbing in and out of the bath or slipping and falling while still in recovery.

Exercise Restriction

Please restrict your pet's activity for the ENTIRE 8-week recovery unless otherwise directed. Your pet must NOT be allowed to run, jump, or play roughly during this time. He/she may be taken outdoors on a short leash with a sling 2-3 times a day to urinate and defecate but should be immediately brought back indoors.

Exercise Restriction (continued)

When not under your direct supervision, your pet should be confined to a crate or small room.

If applicable, a sling may be purchased for your pet. This is to help with hind end control, slow movement during recovery, and prevent him/her from slipping on wet ground or slick surfaces. It should be used for the first 2-4 weeks after orthopedic surgery until better mobility is achieved.

After 2 weeks (or after suture removal), gradually increase your pet's leash walks by 5 minutes each week. Do NOT increase his/her walking to more than 30 minutes by week 8.

If at any time your pet becomes increasingly lame or painful, please call your veterinarian or Dogwood surgeon for additional recommendations.

Passive Range of Motion

This may be performed on your pet standing or laying down. Please start at the toes and work up the leg performing bending and extending exercises at each joint. Perform 10-15 repetitions per joint 2-3 times a day as tolerated by your pet. This may start 1-2 days after surgery and continue until your pet is using his/her leg more frequently. Please go slow and minimize stress.

Please refer to this demonstration produced by Purdue University:
<https://www.dogwoodveterinarysurgery.com/prom/>

Medications

Your pet will be sent home with oral medications. Please discuss administration with your veterinarian at time of discharge from the hospital.

Re-Check Visits

Your pet will need a recheck appointment in **10-14 days** for skin suture/staple removal and/or incision check.

Pets with orthopedic implants and expected bone healing should have additional radiographs performed in **8 weeks** from the initial surgery. Please schedule these appointments with your veterinarian. Your Dogwood surgeon can be contacted for review of radiographs and for any questions in the recovery period.

If there is adequate healing at this 8-week point and you have veterinary approval, slowly and gradually increase your pet's activity over the next 2-3 weeks. Your pet may also benefit from water treadmill therapy and leash walks on inclines/declines. This increase in activity should be **SUPERVISED** and on leash until full function is achieved.

Occasionally your pet may be lame after increased activity. Please allow 24 hours of rest and then continue on your schedule.

If at any time you notice your pet to become lethargic, uninterested in food, or unable to hold down food, please contact your veterinary office or local emergency room.

If at any time your pet becomes increasingly lame or painful within this recovery period, please call your primary veterinarian or your Dogwood surgeon as this can be a sign of implant failure or infection.

Soft Tissue Recovery

Recovering from Soft Tissue Surgery

Please follow the below instructions for a successful recovery. In general, the recovery period is around 2-4 weeks. Each patient is unique and circumstances will vary from one pet to the next.

Incisions

Please monitor each incision for any excessive redness, swelling, discharge or separation of the surgical site.

DO NOT, for any reason, allow your pet to lick, chew or groom the surgical site. An e-collar should be purchased and kept on your pet at all times to keep from damaging the surgical site.

Unless otherwise directed, use ice compression for 5-10 minutes (as tolerated) 3-4 times a day for the first 24-36 hours. After which, use warm compression 5-10 minutes (as tolerated) 3-4 times a day until for the next 24-48 hours until swelling subsides. You should always use a towel or barrier against the skin to prevent thermal damage and always check the temperature on your skin first.

NO BATHS throughout the recovery period (2-4 weeks) or until approved by a veterinarian **AFTER** suture/staple removal.

Exercise Restriction

Please restrict your pet's activity for the next 10-14 days unless otherwise directed. Too much activity can cause excessive swelling and separation/breakdown of the surgical site.

Medications

Your pet will be sent home with oral medications. Please discuss administration with your veterinarian at time of discharge from the hospital.

Re-Check Visits

Your pet will need a recheck appointment in 10-14 days for skin suture/staple removal and/or incision check. Additional lab work, diagnostic imaging or other procedures will be discussed on a case by case basis.

Results

Histopathology and microbiology samples may have been taken during surgery. Your veterinary clinic will update you with results as soon as they become available.

If at any time you notice your pet becoming lethargic, uninterested in food, or unable to hold down food, please contact your veterinary office or local emergency room.

Bandage Care

If your pet is sent home with a light bandage covering over the incision(s):

- Please keep it on for the next 1-2 days , unless it falls off sooner.
- It should be removed immediately if wet or soiled.
- Do NOT let your pet chew the bandage. An e-collar will be imperative to prevent mutilation of the covering.
- If it is still on after 2 days, it can be removed. A small amount of alcohol or acetone on the ADHESIVE (not incision) will remove the residual adhesive for bandage removal.

If your pet is sent home with an immobilization bandage (splints, casts):

- Please monitor daily for wetness. If wet, please contact your veterinarian to have the bandage removed/changed.
- Monitor your pet's toes for swelling (i.e. toes separating). This can be an indication that the bandage is too tight and needs to be changed by your veterinarian.
- The bandage should be kept clean and dry at all times. Please cover the bandage with a plastic bag when going outside to prevent soiling. Remove the bag once inside.
- Do NOT let your pet chew the bandage. An e-collar will be imperative to prevent mutilation of the bandage.
- Should the bandage become soiled, have a foul odor or fall off, contact your veterinarian for immediate replacement.
- Please schedule regular interval rechecks with your veterinarian until the bandage can be removed. Failure to do so can result in skin trauma, blood supply issues, loss of function and prolonged recovery.



Marian Benitez, DVM, MS, DACVS-SA

Dogwood Veterinary Surgical Care
PO Box 2473
Cornelius, NC 28031

980-257-4247

contact@dogwoodveterinarysurgery.com