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## POSTOPERATIVE AFTERCARE INSTRUCTIONS FOR SURGICAL PATIENTS AT VMC

### BEFORE YOUR PET COMES HOME, YOU WILL NEED TO:

**Decide how you will restrict your pet's activity when unsupervised.**

You may need to purchase a crate or kennel or you may need to "pet proof" a small room that can be used for this purpose. There should be no furniture for your pet to jump on or off, but soft, clean bedding should be provided at all times.

**Talk to our surgical team about stairs in the household.**

We understand that stairs cannot always be completely avoided in every situation. If you have stairs your pet will need to navigate either inside or outside your home, please discuss your situation with our surgical team. We can help you with tools and techniques that can get you and your pet safely up and down the stairs in your home during your pet's recovery period.

**Ask us about any items you may need when your pet comes home that we do not supply here at VMC.** Some pets may require a harness instead of a collar, special food, special litter, or over the counter supplies that we do not carry here at VMC. Ask us to be sure and you can save yourself an unexpected trip to the store!

**Consider bathing your pet a day or two prior to surgery.** Your pet will not be able to be bathed for at least 10 -14 days after surgery, so consider this (in non-emergent cases) prior to the surgical date.

**Understand that hair grows back!** The area around the surgical area will be completely shaved of fur. This is a temporary situation, but many pet owners are surprised at the size of the shaved area. We shave only what is medically necessary to ensure a sterile surgical site, and it will grow back

**Talk to your children about your pet's surgery.** If you have young children in your home, you will want to make sure they understand your pet will have special needs after surgery. Your children will need to cooperate with exercise restriction and other needs, and should understand that your pet needs gentle handling more than ever. It may also be a good idea to prepare your children about things like the surgical incision and the shaved surgical site. Some children (and adults!) can be initially upset by the sight of the incision, so talking about it in a positive way may be helpful.



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*Please use these sample instructions to familiarize yourself with what to expect after surgery, so that you can make any necessary preparations prior to your pet's arrival home after surgery.*

You will receive postoperative instructions written specifically for your pet's individual situation when your pet is discharged from the Veterinary Medical Center.

Please refer to your pet's individual instructions or contact our facility directly with any questions.

## **GENERAL NEUROLOGIC (SPINAL) SURGERY SAMPLE INSTRUCTIONS**

### **Surgical Incision**

- The surgical incision should be inspected daily for any evidence of infection. A small amount of redness or swelling can be normal. Signs of infection include excessive redness, heat, swelling, pain, and/or any discharge (such as pus). Please contact VMC as soon as possible if any of these signs are observed.
- Your pet should not be allowed to lick or chew at the incision. Do not underestimate the amount of trauma your pet can create in this area! Even gentle licking can interfere with appropriate healing and may introduce bacteria to the surgical site. We will monitor your pet while hospitalized, and will place an Elizabethan collar if the tendency to lick or chew is noticed. The collar will need to be worn until the sutures or staples are removed. Please contact us for advice if your pet exhibits this behavior after arrival home.
- Bathing should be avoided until skin closure has been removed and the incision determined to be adequately healed.
- You will need to make an appointment to have your pet's skin staples removed in 10-14 days.

### **Activity Level**

Your pet needs to be fully restricted and should have no unsupervised or uncontrolled activity. Supervised activity includes physical rehabilitation and exercises as directed as well as trips outside to urinate/defecate.

- For a time, you may need to carry your pet to his or her favorite spots to urinate and defecate. Allow your pet a chance to urinate or defecate, then carry your pet back inside. We will instruct you in appropriate support techniques if you are unable to carry your pet.
- It is imperative that your pet have strictly limited activity during the first 6 – 8 weeks (at minimum!) after surgery to allow early bone healing. When unsupervised, your pet should be strictly confined (we will specify an amount of time suitable for your pet on your individual discharge instructions). This means your pet is to be confined to a small room or crate with a nonskid floor surface when left unattended.
- During the entire recovery time, your pet is to be kept on a leash when walked outside. Walks should allow for urination and defecation only, and should not be strenuous. Under no circumstances should your pet be allowed to run free either inside the house or outdoors. Stairs, jumping, and climbing are to be avoided until you are instructed otherwise.
- We understand that stairs cannot always be completely avoided in every situation. If you have stairs your pet will need to navigate either inside or outside your home, please discuss your situation with our surgical team. We can help you with tools and techniques that can get you and your pet safely up and down the stairs in your home during your pet's recovery period.
- We will discuss a plan for physical rehabilitation and exercise.

### **Rechecks**

The need for rechecks is highly variable after orthopedic surgeries. We will provide you with a schedule created for your pet at the time of discharge—likely a combination of visits with our surgeon and our Pain Management Center. Please feel free to contact our surgical team or Pain Management Center if you are at all concerned about your pet after surgery. Our Emergency service is always available to address your concerns.