Caring for your pet after surgery

Watch your pet closely for the first few days of recovery. Offer a strong dose of love, reassurance and pampering—and always follow the doctor’s instructions. Here are some things to watch for:

**Overeating** – Pets excited about being home tend to eat or drink too much or too fast, which can cause vomiting. They may also be slightly nauseous from any anesthetics used.

For the first 24 hours, feed your pet small quantities of its regular, well-balanced diet as recommended by the doctor—and no table food.

**Excess licking** – It’s common for a pet to lick the surgical site once in a while, but excess licking can lead to infection or premature removal of the sutures. If your pet won’t leave its sutures alone, call us immediately. Your pet may need additional pain medication or special collars or bandaging to protect the incision.

Be sure to check the incision site and stitches twice a day, and make sure the area is clean and dry. If you notice any redness, swelling, discharge or signs of pain, contact us right away.

**Over-exuberance** – Pets excited by being home may want to celebrate with extra activity, but it’s important to keep them quiet. Recovering pets need their strength to heal and extra movement can put unnecessary strain on the incision site. Encourage them to rest when inside, and restrict their outside activity with a leash.

**Other physical signs** – Watch closely for vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, excessive tiredness after a day or two, depression and a lack of appetite. The doctor may also show you how to check your pet’s temperature so you can make sure fever is not developing. If your pet exhibits any of these signs or you suspect any problem at all, give us a call.

Bandage care

Pets in splints, casts or bandages need extra special care. It’s important to discourage licking or chewing, which can weaken and unravel a bandage. If your pet is giving excessive attention to a bandage, let us know right away. We may recommend additional pain medications, a special collar, muzzle, spray or even a sedative to keep your pet safe and secure during recovery.

More tips for bandage care:

- Keep the bandage clean and dry by keeping your pet quiet and indoors as much as possible. When you must take your pet outside, cover bandaged extremities with a plastic bag; be sure to remove the bag within one hour.
- Most bandages must be changed every two to four days. Check bandages daily for abnormal odors, discoloration, weakening or moistness. If you notice a problem, call us. The bandage may need to be reinforced or replaced.

Giving medications

It is very important to leave the hospital with a clear understanding of prescription instructions—and to carry them out accurately at home. Follow the instructions in this handout that have been provided for you by your veterinarian. Don’t hesitate to ask if you have questions or to call if you forget to give the medication to your pet.

Your veterinarian will demonstrate how to administer medicine to your pet. When giving your pet medication, always be firm, calm and reassuring. Have everything out and ready prior to getting your pet. If you feel uncomfortable or are experiencing difficulty with a stubborn pet, call us for help.

**Liquid** – Hold your pet’s head still and maneuver the dropper or syringe into the corner of the mouth. Dispense the medicine toward the back of the throat slowly to avoid gagging. Some liquids can be mixed with food, but please consult your Banfield veterinarian first.
Drops or ointments – For the skin, rub medication gently in a circular motion with a cotton applicator, and make sure it’s absorbed or dried before letting your pet lick the area. Don’t forget to wash your hands thoroughly after handling topical medications.

For the ears – Gently hold the ear over the head to expose the ear canal. Do not put the applicator tip into the ear canal. Administer the medication, then massage the base of the ear where it contacts the head. Clean the applicator if it touches the ear.

For the eyes – Form a pouch by pulling down your pet’s lower lid with the thumb of one hand. With your other hand, place medication in the pouch. Do not touch the eye with the applicator. If possible, avoid your pet’s line of vision as you approach the eye with the applicator.

Follow these tips when giving medication:

Tablet or capsule – From an overhead position, use one hand to press your pet’s upper lips gently behind both of the large canine teeth. Lift the chin and point their nose toward the ceiling. With your other hand, gently and evenly open the lower jaw, and use your index finger to place the pill on the base of the tongue as far back as possible. Do these steps quickly—and don’t keep your hand in your pet’s mouth. Gently hold the mouth closed until your pet swallows (Observe the throat for a swallowing motion and watch for your pet to lick its lips).

For pets needing a bit more coaxing: Hide the pill in a pet food meatball or lubricate the pill with a little margarine for easier swallowing. For pets that clamp their jaws shut, we may prescribe a liquid medication or suggest use of a pill gun. Call us with any problems, and we will work with you to find the solution. Sometimes owners have to bring in pets every day for a Banfield associate to administer the medication. Don’t feel embarrassed; many pets are very difficult to medicate.

Going home
Just like people, pets recover best after surgery or illness when surrounded by loved ones. At Banfield, we send pets home as soon as possible for that very reason. The best follow-up medicine is the tender loving care that only you can provide.

Your pet will still need special care and attention. Listen carefully to the advice and direction provided by the doctor, and in this handout, and call if you have questions. Not following our recommendations could lead to costs for additional care.

Medication instructions
Ointment/solution _______________________________
Apply to ______________________________________
Number of times daily _________ for ___________ days

Pain medications ______________________________
Give □ capsules □ tablets □ drops
Number of times daily _________ for ___________ days

Antibiotic ______________________________
Give □ capsules □ tablets □ drops
Number of times daily _________ for ___________ days

Special diet ______________________________
Feed _________ □ cans □ cups

Vitamins
Give ___________ □ tablets □ drops
Number of times daily _________ for ___________ days

Other ______________________________

Follow-up visits
Return in _________ □ days □ weeks □ months
Purpose ______________________________

For additional information, please contact your Banfield medical team.