VetterCare
Expert Pet Care. At Home.



A FREE KIT FOR THE DAYS AFTER YOUR DOG'S SURGERY

Home from surgery. Now what?

Recovery happens at home, and your vet's discharge instructions are the plan. This kit puts that plan on paper, helps you notice changes early, and makes it easy to hand off your dog's care with confidence, whoever is giving it.

General information to use with your veterinarian. Not medical advice.

1. Discharge instructions
2. Cone, walks and activity
3. Recovery day log
4. Signs to call your vet
5. Care handoff sheet
6. Questions for your vet

STEP 1 · FILL THIS IN BEFORE YOU LEAVE THE CLINIC

Your vet's discharge instructions

Ask your vet or the surgeon to go through each blank with you. Their instructions come first; every surgery is different. ACVS

Dog's name _____ **Surgery date** _____

Procedure _____

Surgeon / vet _____ **Phone** _____

Medication (name on the label)	Amount, as prescribed	Times	With food?	Last day

Give pain medication exactly as directed, even if your dog seems comfortable. Never give human pain medication. (ACVS; ASPCA clinic)

FOOD AND WATER

First meal at home: when _____ **How much** _____

Food during recovery ☐ usual food ☐ other: _____

INCISION, STITCHES AND BATHING

Stitches ☐ dissolve on their own ☐ need removing, date: _____

No bath or swimming until _____ **Bandage?** ☐ no ☐ yes, change on: _____

Ointment or cleaning ☐ none ☐ only as my vet says: _____

RECHECKS

Recheck _____ **Recheck** _____

Anything else my vet wants me to know:

_____

_____

STEP 2 · THE HOUSE RULES WHILE YOUR DOG HEALS

Cone, walks and activity rules

Here is what the published veterinary sources describe. Your vet sets the dates; write them in the blanks.

The cone

- [ ] On as long as your vet says. It stops licking and chewing at the incision. ACVS
- [ ] Licking or chewing can cause infection or make the incision come apart. Texas A&M
- [ ] After a spay or neuter: on at all times for the first week, or at least 10 days. Tufts clinic; Virginia Tech
- [ ] Off only for meals or a walk while you watch. Back on right after. ASPCA clinic; Tufts clinic
- [ ] A recovery suit or sleeve only if your vet advises it. ACVS

Activity

- [ ] No running, jumping, rough play or stairs, as your vet directs. Small dogs can be carried on stairs. ACVS; ASPCA clinic
- [ ] A crate or small room when you can't watch your dog, big enough to stand up and turn around. ACVS; ASPCA clinic
- [ ] Calm activity instead: food puzzles and quiet time together. ACVS

Walks

- [ ] Outside on a leash, for bathroom breaks only, unless your vet says otherwise. ACVS
- [ ] A leash on every walk, so your dog can't run or jump. Virginia Tech
- [ ] After a spay or neuter: no strenuous exercise for two weeks. Virginia Tech

MY VET'S INSTRUCTIONS

Cone stays on until _____ **Off for meals?** ☐ yes, if watched ☐ no

Crate or small room until _____ **Leash only until** _____

Stairs and jumping allowed from _____ **Walks: how long** _____

Rehab or home exercises _____

Why rest matters: even dogs who seem to feel well are still healing. Too much movement or jumping can stress the incision and slow healing. ACVS

STEP 3 · ONE LINE PER DAY

Recovery day log

Bring this to every recheck. Count each time your dog urinates and defecates on leash outings. It's a record for you and your vet, not a guide to changing treatment.

Date	Incision check OK / changed (see page 4)	Ate all / some / none	Drank usual / less	Leash outings times	Urinated outside times	Defecated outside times	Energy sleepy / usual / restless	Meds given as prescribed name + time	Initials	Notes

Check the incision every day; a photo every day or so helps your vet see changes. A healing incision is clean and dry, with the edges closed. Eating less and a delayed bowel movement for a day or two are common at first. (ACVS; AAHA; Texas A&M; Tufts clinic) Print as many copies as recovery needs.

STEP 4 · KEEP THIS ON THE FRIDGE

Signs to call your vet

CALL YOUR VET RIGHT AWAY IF YOUR DOG

- Has more redness, swelling or heat at the incision
- Has discharge, pus or a bad smell
- Has cloudy, yellow or green drainage
- Bleeds, or the incision opens
- Licks or chews it and you can't stop it
- Vomits or has diarrhea
- Refuses food or water for more than 12 hours
- Can't urinate, or strains
- Hasn't defecated after 48 hours
- Has blood in the urine or stool
- Has pale gums or labored breathing
- Is still very sleepy or wobbly after 24 hours
- Can't rest or get comfortable
- Cries for more than an hour
- Has pain that gets worse
- Has a bandage that slips, gets wet or smells

If you're unsure whether a change is normal, call. That is always appropriate.

American College of Veterinary Surgeons; AAHA; Texas A&M; ASPCA Spay/Neuter Alliance; Tufts clinic

COMMON IN THE FIRST 24 HOURS

- Sleeping more
- Eating less or skipping a meal
- Restless or more vocal
- Wobbly for a few hours
- Urinating less or more on day one
- No bowel movement for 1–2 days
- A little coughing

Dogs often hide pain. Tell your vet about panting, trembling, crying or whimpering, not wanting to move, or licking one spot. Call if coughing seems excessive. (ACVS; AAHA; Texas A&M; Merck Veterinary Manual; Tufts clinic)

If your dog is experiencing an emergency, please contact your veterinarian or the nearest emergency animal hospital right away.

Surgeon or vet _____ Phone _____

Emergency hospital _____ Phone _____

STEP 5 · FOR ANYONE CARING FOR YOUR DOG

Care handoff sheet

Dog's name _____ Weight _____ Age _____

Surgery _____ Date _____

Our vet _____ Phone _____

Emergency hospital _____ Phone _____

My phone while I'm away _____

CONE, REST AND LEASH OUTINGS

Cone on until _____ Off for meals? ☐ yes, if watched ☐ no

Rest until (vet's date) _____ Crate or room _____

Leash outings: times a day _____ How long each _____

Stairs ☐ carry ☐ blocked ☐ allowed Usual bathroom spot _____

Medication (name on the label)	Amount, as prescribed	Times	Given with food?

INCISION, FOOD AND OTHER PETS

Incision: what it looks like today _____

Food + amount _____ Times _____

Keep apart from _____

ASK YOUR VET, AND WRITE THEIR ANSWER HERE

If my dog won't eat, urinate or defecate, when should my caregiver call?

If a medication is missed or late, what should happen?

If the incision changes (see page 4), who should be called first?

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STEP 6 · BRING THIS TO YOUR NEXT VISIT

Questions for your vet

1. How long does the cone stay on, and can it come off for meals or walks?
2. How long can walks be, and when can we walk normally again?
3. When are stairs, jumping and play allowed again? Does my dog need a crate?
4. When and how much should my dog eat after we get home?
5. Are the stitches dissolving, or do they need to come out? When?
6. When can my dog have a bath or swim?
7. Which pain signs should I watch for, and what do I do if I see them?
8. When should I worry if my dog hasn't urinated or defecated?
9. When are our rechecks?

Sources. American College of Veterinary Surgeons, "Postoperative Care After Surgery: What Animal Owners Should Expect" · American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA), "What Can I Expect When My Pet Needs Anesthesia?" · Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine & Biomedical Sciences (Pet Talk articles and the Veterinary Medical Teaching Hospital's orthopedic home-care instructions) · ASPCA Spay/Neuter Alliance, "After Surgery Instructions" · Washington State University Veterinary Teaching Hospital, "Canine Castration Discharge Instructions" · Merck Veterinary Manual, "Recognizing and Assessing Pain in Animals" · Tufts University Cummings School of Veterinary Medicine, Lerner Spay/Neuter Clinic, "Aftercare" · Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine, "What to expect when your pet is getting spayed or neutered."



NEED TO STEP AWAY DURING RECOVERY?

A veterinary professional can follow the plan at home.

Recovery can last days or weeks, and plans don't always wait. A VetterCare veterinary professional can follow your veterinarian's written discharge instructions at home: giving medications as prescribed, and taking your dog out on a leash as your vet allows, and keeping an eye on comfort, appetite and the incision. Your dog stays home, in a calm and familiar place. You get photo updates while you're away, and you meet your veterinary professional in person before you leave.

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In-home care across Greater Phoenix, Tucson, Prescott and Dallas–Fort Worth.

VetterCare gathers this information from published veterinary sources. It is general information, not veterinary advice, and doesn't replace an exam by your veterinarian. VetterCare veterinary professionals follow your veterinarian's instructions. If your pet is experiencing an emergency, contact your veterinarian or the nearest emergency animal hospital right away.

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