

## Surgery – What to Expect

The Surgery Department at Veterinary Specialty Center (VSC) offers a variety of surgical solutions to treat your pet including soft tissue, neurologic, laparoscopic, and oncologic surgical procedures along with interventional radiology techniques. The most advanced digital imaging (CT and MRI) and anesthesia monitoring are utilized for comprehensive, high-quality care. Our board-certified anesthesiologists guide anesthetic protocol development to minimize patient risk. The moment your pet enters our hospital for surgery, they receive 24-hour personalized care from diagnosis to discharge.

**Initial consultation** - Your surgical appointment will start with a consultation, which includes an examination of your pet, review of all information sent by your primary care veterinarian and discussion of the pertinent history. Your surgeon will discuss your pet's condition, all treatment options and prognosis. Prior to any treatment, a patient care plan with an estimate of cost will be provided based on this discussion. We understand that each pet is unique and we will work with you to find the best treatment option for your pet and family situation. During this time you will have an opportunity to ask questions about the benefits and risks of the procedure, follow-up and expected outcome.

**Fasting instructions** - Your pet needs to have an empty stomach before undergoing anesthesia to prevent regurgitation during the procedure, which can cause serious complications. Please feed your pet a normal dinner but **NO FOOD** 12 hours prior to your appointment and **NO WATER** 4 hours prior. This helps ensure the safest procedure possible for your pet.

**Special fasting instructions** - Pediatric patients (less than 6 months of age) should not be fasted for more than 6 hours. Diabetic patients need to fast 12 hours prior to your appointment and receive half their insulin dose with no food the morning of the appointment. Please bring your pet's insulin in its regular bottle. For both pediatric and diabetic patients no water 4 hours prior to the appointment.

**Surgical care** - It is of the utmost importance that our patients are safe and comfortable prior to, during and after the surgical procedure. We set up detailed anesthetic and pain management protocols utilizing multi-faceted approaches tailored to best treat each patient. To maximize patient comfort and minimize their stress levels, patients receive pain medication prior to, during and after surgery. Our surgical staff has been trained and makes it a priority to recognize signs of pain in our patients so that they are as comfortable as possible.

Our operating rooms are equipped with the latest anesthesia equipment allowing us to closely monitor patients and make appropriate decisions during surgery. Most patients require overnight hospitalization after their surgical procedure. We are staffed around the clock to ensure that your pet's recovery and pain levels are monitored and immediately addressed as needed.

**Procedure times** - Procedures are performed throughout the day and into the evening. The starting times are determined based upon multiple factors including case's urgency, required diagnostics and equipment availability. The first procedure will begin after the surgeon is finished seeing appointments. A member of our staff will notify you when surgery is about to begin and the surgeon will call with an update of your pet's progress once the procedure is finished. If you have concerns, you can call for an update at any time.

**Recovery** - Hospitalization times vary depending on the procedure. Detailed summaries are sent to your primary veterinarian with recommendations for home recovery, pain management, rehabilitation, and follow-up medical care.

**Updates on your pet** - You may call to obtain patient updates at any time. Please understand that veterinary nurses are not able to discuss test results or a diagnosis with you. Veterinary nursing rounds are scheduled between 8:00 and 8:30 in the morning and evenings, so calling during this time may result in the client service team taking a message.

**Diets** - If your pet is on a special diet or you would prefer that we serve him or her their regular diet, you may leave food with your pet. A few treats are acceptable. All food must be cooked so we do not risk exposing any patient that may already have a compromised immune system to bacteria. We do not accept raw diets.

**Medications** - Please discuss all your pet's current medications with our client service team when booking your appointment as we may require some medications to be temporarily discontinued prior to surgery. We recommend that you bring your pet's medication(s) in the original bottle(s) when your pet is admitted to the hospital. This allows for verification of dosages.

**Personal items** – Any personal items such as blankets, towels, toys, collars and leashes be left at home. Rest assured, we have plenty of towels and blankets for all patients to rest and snuggle on. If you wish to leave something with your pet, understand that it may become soiled or lost despite our best efforts to return every item.

**Visiting** - Visiting a pet on the day of an anesthetic procedure is usually not recommended for routine procedures. This allows your pet to remain calm and begin the healing process. After the first night, if you would like to visit, please speak with our team to schedule a visitation time.

**Discharge information** - When your pet is ready to leave the hospital, a veterinary nurse will review all of the home care instructions with you. This includes bandage and incision care as well as how to give medications. You will be provided with a copy of the discharge instructions to take home. If you have additional questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to ask or call us anytime. If you need to speak directly to a doctor, please inform us and the doctor will call you when they become available.

**Questions or concerns** - For any non-urgent questions, you will be asked to leave a message for the surgery team or you can email them directly at [surgery@vetspecialty.com](mailto:surgery@vetspecialty.com). If you have any urgent medical concerns outside of the Surgery Department's normal business hours, please call our Emergency and Critical Care Department 24 hours a day **(847.459.7535)**.

**Preparing your home** - After arriving home, you should keep your pet warm and comfortable by providing a soft clean bed, ideally in a quiet and draft-free room at approximately 68° -72° F (20° -22° C). Unless otherwise instructed, your pet should be given ample fresh water. After a few hours, a small amount of food may be given. You should restrict activity by not allowing any jumping as it can cause excessive stretching of the wound.

**Patient care plan** - Once you agree to a course of treatment, you will be presented with a patient care plan that includes an approximate range for the cost of care and gives your authorization for treatment. You are required to leave 100% of the low end of the patient care plan when your pet is admitted to the hospital or at the time of service.

**Payment options** - Accepted payment options include cash, check, and credit card (Visa, MasterCard, Discover and American Express). Financing options are available through CareCredit for qualifying individuals. If you are interested in applying for CareCredit, please let a member of our team know or apply online at [www.carecredit.com](http://www.carecredit.com).

**Prescription refills** -To allow our staff to provide the in-depth care necessary for our patients, we require 24 hours' notice for prescription refills. There is a \$25 fee for refills requested outside of the regular Surgery Department's hours Monday through Friday from 9am-5pm. Per FDA regulations, dispensed medications may not be returned to VSC (CPG sec. 460.300).

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*Veterinary Specialty Center is guided by the belief that companion animals deserve state-of-the-art medical care in a kind and comforting environment. The courage of our patients, the loyalty of their human families, and the devotion of our referral veterinarians inspire our vision. It is sustained by the contributions of our compassionate, knowledgeable and dedicated staff and built upon a tradition of providing unsurpassed healthcare for animals.*

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