

# What should I know about general anesthesia in my pet?

**General anesthesia** means that your pet will be given a combination of medications that reduce pain and anxiety, followed by drugs that cause unconsciousness. Once unconscious, a breathing tube is placed in the trachea and oxygen and anesthetic gas are given by inhalation.

## ***State-of-the-art support for anesthetized patients includes:***

- ✓ Anesthesia standards that are drafted and overseen by our board certified anesthesiologist.
- ✓ Monitoring vital signs (like EKG, respiration and blood pressure).
- ✓ The most current and comprehensive pain management techniques for patients having surgery.
- ✓ Anesthesia and surgery technicians with special expertise and training.
- ✓ Specialized body temperature maintenance systems.

## ***Before you bring your pet in for anesthesia, make sure you understand the following:***

- ✓ To help avoid complications, your pet should NOT have any food in the morning prior to anesthesia.
- ✓ You MAY offer your pet water.
- ✓ Bring any medications your pet is currently taking, so that we can continue to give these if needed.
- ✓ Bring some of your pet's food to avoid sudden changes in diet.
- ✓ Give your dog her usual walk in the morning so that she can relieve herself before the ride and initial visit.
- ✓ If we have instructed you to change your pet's medication schedule (i.e. lower insulin dose or to withhold a particular drug), write yourself a note so you remember early in the morning.

## ***So you don't worry:***

**WE USE CHECKLISTS** – Medical checklists ensure that all steps of patient care have been correctly met and help eliminate the risk of errors.

**AROUND THE CLOCK CARE** – Teams of highly trained veterinarians and veterinary technicians monitor your pet for stability and comfort, night and day.

**PAIN MANAGEMENT IS A SPECIALTY** – Your companion will benefit from our dedication to treating pain—generally two or more types of medications, including epidurals, local anesthetic injections and cryotherapy are used, just as they would be for a human having surgery.

**LOW LEVEL LASER** – Our specialty hospital uses a Class IV laser, the fastest and most powerful way of delivering light-based therapy that can be used to heal wounds, manage surgical pain and swelling, soothe tight muscles and improve pain in chronically affected joints and ligaments.

## ***When your pet is admitted to our hospital for anesthesia:***

- ✓ We ask you about medications you are currently giving and phone numbers so we can reach you for updates, and discuss your preferences in case of emergency.
- ✓ If we feel your pet has any potential increased risk of complications due to anesthesia—because of breed, age or disease—we will discuss this with you.
- ✓ Your pet gets an ID band and a comfortable spot to rest. We check your pet's vital signs and blood tests, and design an individualized anesthesia plan tailored to your pet's age, health, degree of anxiety and need for pain medications.
- ✓ We will call you once your pet has awakened from anesthesia to give you an update, and if she needs to stay overnight, make arrangements for you to visit later on.

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## ***Here is what to expect when your pet comes home:***

It is important to realize that being in the hospital can be stressful. We may give your pet sedatives to help with relaxation and sleep while admitted. Despite this, not every patient sleeps well when she isn't at home. Once home, your pet may want to nap more than usual for a day or two, depending on how long she was away. This is normal.

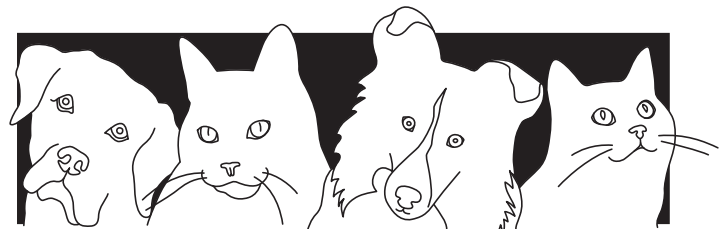
The best way to help your pet recover is to provide a calm, low stimulus location, but near a comforting family member. Avoid over-exertion and feed smaller meals than normal. If your pet won't eat the first evening home, that is OK, but appetite should return within 24 hours.

Your pet should urinate within the first 12 hours at home, so please monitor for this. If your pet does not urinate in that time, please call us.

Your pet may not have a bowel movement for up to 48 hours—this is because anesthesia and some medications slow down the GI tract. Plus, after anesthesia, some pets don't like to eat and lengthy walks are not possible. Do not worry unless your pet is straining to defecate.

## ***How to tell whether your pet is comfortable after surgery:***

- ✓ Your pet should be able to sleep in a relaxed position. Restlessness can be due to pain, but some medications can also cause unsettled behavior.
- ✓ Your pet may not be able to climb up or down stairs without help. However, your pet should be able to rise from a sleeping position and lie back down with little difficulty. If your pet is unwilling to move around at all, it may be due to pain.
- ✓ Your pet should be glad to see you when you come home or offer some close companionship. If your pet seems dull or disinterested, or actively shies away from you, this could indicate that she is feeling more pain than she should.
- ✓ Vocalizations such as repetitive whining are often due to side effects of medications. Sometimes stopping or switching medications helps. If your pet cries out when she changes position or when you lift her then more pain medication might be necessary.
- ✓ If you have concerns about your pet's pain or well-being after anesthesia or surgery, give us a call.



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