

# Cat Neuter Surgery: An Aftercare Guide for Pet Parents

While neutering is one of the most common veterinary surgeries, recovery still requires post-operative care and monitoring. Use this guide to understand the process, how to provide the best post-op care, and when you might need to contact your vet.

## Why Neuter Your Cat?

Neutering a male cat offers several benefits, including preventing unwanted litters, reducing the risk of certain health problems like testicular cancer and prostate issues, and potentially curbing certain undesirable behaviors.

It also plays a role in controlling the overall cat population, reducing the number of homeless animals.

## The Day Before Surgery...

Your vet will give you a few instructions that may include:

- Don't feed your cat after midnight.
- Offer your cat a small amount of water.

## What Will I Need?

Use this checklist of items and products to help make your cat's recovery a smooth one:

- Comfortable bedding and blankets
- Pain medication (supplied by your veterinarian)
- Clean litter box
- Food and water bowls
- Calming aids, such as Feliway, as recommended by your veterinarian
- Recovery cone to prevent licking and biting of the surgical site



## Day of the Surgery...

Here's what to expect:

- Arrive at the hospital early in the morning.
- After all paperwork is filled out, your pet will be hospitalized, have his blood drawn, and have an intravenous (IV) catheter put in place.
- Your vet will perform a thorough exam and review your cat's medical records and blood work.
- Your vet will create an anesthetic plan that's a good fit for your cat.
- Your pet will be given pain medication and sedatives to help with general anesthesia, which is used to keep your pet unconscious and pain free during his surgery.
- A breathing tube will be put in place to help your pet during surgery, and he will be shaved and sterilely prepped. Don't be alarmed if your cat has a lot of hair removed!
- In some cases, a cat's testicle doesn't drop, a condition called cryptorchidism, and remains in the abdomen. If this occurs, your veterinarian will need to find and remove it during the surgery, as an undescended testicle can increase a pet's risk of cancer if it's not removed.



## What Should I Expect When My Cat Comes Home?

Because your cat was under anesthesia, they may still be groggy after leaving the hospital; it should wear off in 24 hours. It's recommended that you don't leave your cat unattended for 24–48 hours after surgery.

Your vet will likely send your cat home with medications to reduce pain and inflammation.

Cats often rebound quickly after being neutered, but providing pain relief and comfort can aid in the healing process.

The first night home, offer your cat:

- A small amount of water (about half as usual).
- A small amount of food (about a quarter or half of his usual amount).

**Note:** Stay consistent on limiting your cat's food after his first meal, as sudden changes can lead to gastrointestinal upset.

Avoid adding supplements to their food or offering any human food.

**Give your cat all prescribed medication as directed by your veterinarian.**

If you think your cat is in pain, or if they chew or try to lick the incision site, contact your vet immediately. Do not give your cat any human or over-the-counter pain medications without your vet's approval.

## How Can I Help My Cat?

Be sure to follow your veterinarian's post-op instructions carefully—it's important to make sure your pet heals completely. This includes:

- A two-week period of limited exercise: no jumping, running, or rough play with others. Avoid any activity that can cause the incision to open, bleed, become infected or bruised.
- A suitable resting place (a spot he is used to), with comfortable bedding. A small room closed off with a gate can also keep other pets away during recovery.
- Keeping the surgical site dry—skip bathing your cat during this time.

## How Long Will It Take for My Cat to Heal?

Typically, the recovery period for a cat after neuter surgery is 10–14 days.

Some bruising around the surgical site is normal, but if you notice excessive bruising or discharge from the incision, contact your veterinarian.

Your cat may also have a small bandage on his front leg where the IV catheter was placed. This can be removed a few hours after you return home.

Monitor for vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, or lethargy. If noted or you have concerns, please contact your vet.

## Should I Clean My Cat's Surgical Site?

You should only need to monitor your cat's incision once a day, and keep the area dry.

### **Cleaning the wound is usually not needed.**

Don't apply any topical ointments, sprays, or salves without asking your vet first.

External stitches are rarely used; however, if stitches are present, they are usually removed in two weeks.

## When to Call Your Veterinarian

Neuter surgery is a common and generally very low-risk procedure. It's important to contact your vet if you notice any of the following symptoms in your pet:

- Change in the surgical site (redness, swelling, heat, excessive bruising, discharge).
- Opening of the incision or loss of sutures.
- Vomiting, diarrhea/constipation, loss of appetite.
- Straining to urinate, excessive urination or thirst.
- Coughing or difficulty breathing.
- Fever, lethargy or hyperactivity.
- Vocalization or other signs of pain.
- Abdominal swelling.
- Paleness of the gums.