

Cat Spay Surgery: An Aftercare Guide for Pet Parents

Although it's 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 Spay Your Cat?

Cat spaying eliminates future heat cycles, helping to decrease the likelihood of unwanted behaviors such as urine marking, roaming, yowling, and fighting.

Spaying also helps prevent serious health risks like Pyometra (a life-threatening uterine infection) and pet overpopulation by preventing unwanted pregnancies.

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:

- Early morning hospital arrival, and paperwork to be completed.
- Your cat will be hospitalized, have her blood drawn, and an intravenous (IV) catheter placed.
- Your vet will perform a thorough exam, reviewing your cat's medical records and blood work, and create an anesthetic plan that's best for them.
- Please inform your veterinarian if you think your pet could be pregnant, since surgery may need to be postponed.
- Your cat will be given pain medication and sedatives to help with general anesthesia that keeps your cat unconscious and pain free during their surgery.
- To keep the operation as sterile as possible, the vet will shave your cat where they will operate—don't be alarmed! A breathing tube will also be placed to help your pet during surgery.
- An incision is made on the center of the belly, the ovaries and uterus are tied off and removed, and the incision is closed with sutures.



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 spayed, 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 her usual amount).

Note: Stay consistent on limiting your cat's food after her 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, or become infected or bruised.
- A suitable resting place (a spot she 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 spay 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 her 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 you have any 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

Spay surgery is common and a 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.
- Bleeding, discharge or foul vaginal odor.
- 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.