

5 Things Every Pet Owner Should Know Before Booking Your Pet's Spay or Neuter

If most veterinary hospitals seem to have qualified veterinarians, friendly team members, and can spay or neuter your pet, aren't they all pretty much the same? Does it really matter where and how you choose to have their surgery done? **Yes.**

Here are 5 things that can make a huge difference in:

- ✓ the quality of surgical care that your pet experiences
- ✓ the likelihood of post-operative hassles and complications that you and your pet may experience
- ✓ the overall satisfaction you will have watching your pet live a long healthy life.

1. What type of care does my pet need before surgery?

Surgery requires a general anesthetic. In order to create a pain-free state of complete unconsciousness, a combination of drugs such as sedations, pain relievers and gas anesthetic are administered. Although these drugs enable veterinarians to spay and neuter your pet, they also can have a negative effect on your pet's heart, liver, kidneys and brain.

Knowing your pet is healthy on the inside as well as the outside is critical. Prior to booking a surgery, your pet should have both a complete physical examination and blood tests evaluated to ensure they will tolerate the anesthetic drugs administered to them.

At Davis Drive Animal Clinic, puppies and kittens are examined by a veterinarian at 2, 3, 4 and 5 months of age prior to booking a spay or neuter on or after their 6 month birthday. Adult pets are examined within one month of a scheduled surgery and all pets are re-examined fully again by a veterinarian on the day of surgery. This examination includes taking a temperature, pulse rate and breathing rate, checking your pet's gums to make sure they are pink and moist to touch, ensuring your pet is in ideal body condition to tolerate anesthetic, listening to the heart and lungs to screen for evidence of a heart murmur or irregularity in rhythm, palpation of kidneys and abdominal organs, screening for hernias or loose dewclaws (dogs) and assessment of genitalia to make sure their 'parts' are present and accounted for.

The veterinarian will also examine your pet's teeth to make sure all baby teeth have been lost on schedule and that adult teeth are arriving in the correct location. Smaller breeds (Chihuahua, Poodles) are prone to retained baby (or 'deciduous') teeth and require removal of these under anesthetic in order to prevent over-crowding and alterations in bite. It's always better to deal with all surgical issues while your pet is under one anesthetic rather than multiple anesthetics: For example, combining your dog's spay with a hernia correction and removal of retained baby teeth in one general anesthetic is preferable to 3 separate procedures.

At Davis Drive Animal Clinic, pre-operative blood tests are performed in puppies and kittens at 5 months of age, and in adults within one month of surgery, to evaluate the body's ability to clear anesthetic drugs and to heal. Our hospital performs blood testing on *every patient* prior to their surgery day. We assess a complete blood count (CBC) and blood profile and if abnormalities are encountered, they are dealt with by either altering the anesthetic drugs administered or even rescheduling the surgery so that the abnormalities can be corrected.

2. How many surgeries does my hospital perform every day?

At Davis Drive Animal Clinic we schedule routine cat and dog spays and neuters on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings and we only schedule a maximum of three surgeries per day. Why does this matter? With fewer surgeries scheduled per day, each pet receives our personalized attention (unlike high-volume assembly-line spay/neuter clinics that perform 20-40 surgeries every day). On arrival to the hospital on surgery day, your pet will meet their surgery team made up of one veterinarian and one registered veterinary technician. The surgery team will care for your pet from start to finish - from the pre-operative examination in the morning right through to their recovery late in the day. If your pet requires extra comfort, warmth, pain medication, a bathroom break or attention in any way, we'll give them what they need when they need it without having to wait in line.

3. Are steps taken to protect my pet's longterm health on surgery day?

Your pet's health is always on our minds and especially so during a spay or neuter. General anesthesia is an induced unconscious state which reduces the body's ability to respond to stress or trauma. It can also place stress on internal organs such as the liver, kidneys, heart and brain function by reducing blood pressure and the body's ability to warm itself – each of which may lead to long-term damage if left unchecked during surgery.

At Davis Drive Animal Clinic, our surgical patients are started on an intravenous ('IV') drip prior to surgery. The IV drip is used to administer fluids, anesthetic drugs and pain medication as well as to keep blood pressure normal during surgery. IV fluids also help keep the body hydrated and help to flush out anesthetic drugs when surgery is over. The IV is continued throughout the surgery day until your pet is completely recovered and alert and ready to go home.

In order to keep our patients warm while under anesthetic, we use a warming unit called a Warm Touch®. The Warm Touch® acts like a warm air-filled bed. Our Registered Veterinary Technicians monitor each patient's body temperature throughout surgery to make sure it's kept right on track - this way our patients wake up warm and well hydrated.

We also monitor your pet's vital signs throughout surgery a number of ways, the most important of which is your Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT). Our RVTs are the eyes and ears for your pet during anesthesia and surgery. RVTs monitor your pet's breathing rate, heart rate, blood circulation, temperature, oxygen and anesthetic level with their expert training. They also use specialized equipment throughout anesthesia to measure blood pressure, oxygen saturation and pulse rate and will keep your veterinarian updated. The RVT may also administer medication, adjust IV fluid levels and the heating unit temperature as necessary. While monitoring your pet throughout the surgical procedure right through to recovery, your RVT will keep their thumb on your pet's comfort.

4. How do I assess the qualifications of the people caring for my pet?

In Ontario, qualified veterinarians are licensed to practice veterinary medicine by the College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO). The CVO protects and serves the public interest by regulating the practice of veterinary medicine. The CVO sets out criteria for professionalism, standards and conduct of its members through Ontario Regulations. The regulations are regularly updated and enforced to ensure that the needs of your pet are being met. You may check that veterinary memberships with the CVO are kept current and in good standing at www.cvo.org.

A Registered Veterinary Technician must be a graduate of a college program accredited by the Ontario Association of Veterinary Technicians (OAVT) and must be a member in good standing with the OAVT, which includes the completion of mandatory continuing education credits. For more information see www.oavt.org.

At Davis Drive Veterinary Clinic, we have a veterinary team of 4 qualified veterinarians who are all graduates of the Ontario Veterinary College and are all members in good standing with the CVO. We have a team of 5 Registered Veterinary Technicians. Each of our veterinarians and RVTs regularly attend continuing education seminars, conferences and specialized training programs in many different areas of interest. If you'd like to find out about our team's special areas of interest, just ask!

5. Can I get immediate assistance if I need it after my pet comes home?

So, your pet has been spayed or neutered and you've just arrived home and you have a question or concern. After such a busy day, it's completely normal to feel like you've forgotten to ask something. A full service veterinary team should thoroughly review post-operative discharge instructions and send you with a copy to reference once you get home. You should also know exactly how to get a hold of your veterinary team directly to resolve a question or concern.

At Davis Drive Animal Clinic, most of our surgical patients will be discharged the evening of the day of surgery. We will commonly update you once after surgery is complete and confirm a time to arrive for your discharge appointment. We may even chat with you again a second time later in the afternoon once your pet is awake and comfortable enough to go home.

When you arrive, an RVT will review all of the day's events, review your pet's post-operative pain medication and wound care requirements and go over feeding and exercise instructions for the evening. We will send you with a post-operative checklist so you are able to monitor your pet at home. Next, we'll set up an appointment for a post operative exam at our hospital for the following morning and connect with you again by phone a few days later. Any additional care or post operative evaluations are scheduled with us on an as necessary basis and we always have a team member available to answer your phone calls during regular hospital hours. Out-of-hours concerns are directed to the Veterinary Emergency Clinic of York Region and if necessary, your pet's medical records will be transferred to their team to keep everyone in the loop.

Summary

Planning, scheduling and completing the day of your pet's spay or neuter should be a well thought out event. With the Davis Drive Animal Clinic team helping you along the way, you *can* choose the best quality of surgical care for your pet, reduce the likelihood of post-operative hassles and complications and be satisfied watching your pet live a long healthy life.