

Post-operative Information: Urethrostomy

Your pet has had a urethrostomy performed to create a new, permanent opening in the urethra and remove abnormal tissues or stones. This procedure creates an opening in the urethra above and usually larger than the normal opening; the remaining length of “unused” urethra may or may not have been removed. The urethra heals very rapidly, but can also heal with excessive scarring and tissue formation (called granulation tissue.) It is important to prevent your pet from traumatizing (i.e. excessive licking/chewing) the new urethral opening during the healing phase to prevent these complications. After urethral surgery, the inflammation created by the incisions and manipulation will make your pet feel like he/she has to urinate frequently; this will subside over the next week or so. Once the new opening has matured, in approximately 6 weeks, complications are rare.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

- Please keep your pet in a comfortable, safe indoor location for the next 24 hours until he/she is very steady on his/her feet. Do not allow free access to stairs.
- Your pet may be groggy for the next few days. He or she may whine or appear more anxious than usual; this may indicate pain/discomfort or side-effects of the medications. Please call your veterinarian for assistance with any medication adjustments or return for an examination and additional pain medications as needed.
- Avoid any rigorous activity, playing or jumping for 2 weeks. *For dogs*, short, leashed walks are fine. *Cats* should remain indoors for a minimum of 2 weeks.
- Monitor appetite and attitude. If both do not steadily improve over the next 2-3 days, please call your primary care veterinarian or return for progress evaluation and problem-solving.
- You can expect your pet to have urgency to urinate frequently, a tendency to strain to urinate, and to have blood-tinged urine for 1-2 weeks. Please allow frequent access their routine “bathroom” location to urinate. If your pet has accidents in the house, please understand that he/she likely could not prevent it during this recovery period—have patience. If this increased frequency, straining or bloody urine continues beyond 2 weeks, please return to your primary care veterinarian for evaluation.

TEMPORARY LITTERBOX MODIFICATIONS (for cats)

- All litterboxes in your home should be emptied of litter and washed before your cat comes home. Only shredded paper (or paper “pellet-style” litter; i.e. *Yesterday’s News*®) should be used for 2 weeks. The clay-type and clumping-type litter contains dust that can contaminate the surgery site.
- Please empty the litterboxes frequently during this recovery period to encourage your cat to use them frequently.

INCISION CARE

- Please look at the incision twice daily. It will look very red and there may be blood clots or crusts on the incision; do not clean or disturb the incision. The newly exposed urethra needs time to adjust to being opened and exposed; the redness will subside. The size of the new opening will shrink to 1/3 to 1/2 of its immediate post-surgical size over the next 6 weeks.
- Problems to call your veterinarian about:
 - gapping of the incision or tissue protruding from incision;
 - discharge (other than small amount of crusting);
 - bruising and swelling that extends down the back legs and groin;
 - inability to pass urine over a 12 hour period.

Please call and return for a progress exam immediately (or go to an emergency hospital if overnight or weekends) if you notice these problems. They may indicate urine leakage under the incision; the earlier we catch leaking, the easier it is to treat this potentially life-threatening complication.

- *It is very important that your pet does not lick or chew the incision excessively until it is well healed; they can severely traumatize the new opening or compromise healing. Pets tend to want to lick early in the healing period; please use an E-collar (lampshade-type collar) during the first 2 weeks.*
- *If urine is collecting on the skin or fur around the new opening during urination, you may apply a thin film of ointment around the incision to prevent skin irritation from the urine (i.e. Desitin ointment, A&D ointment, Neosporin ointment, Vaseline). Do not apply to incision. As the incision heals, urination will be better controlled and this will be less of a problem.*

TESTS PENDING

- *If there were any stones removed, they will be submitted for analysis of their composition. Specific dietary modifications and therapy recommendations will be determined from this result. Your veterinarian will contact you with stone results in 2-4 weeks and will make any treatment changes as needed.*
- *If there were any tissues removed for biopsy analysis, they will be submitted and results will be available in 5-7 days. Your veterinarian will contact you with biopsy results and will make any treatment changes as needed.*

DIET

- *(If stones were removed...) Until stone analysis results are returned, please follow the following general recommendations:
--Encourage water consumption. Provide easy access to fresh water daily. Add water to food daily.
--Avoid any dietary supplements (i.e. vitamins, etc.) or edible treats (i.e. biscuits, rawhide, etc.)*

PROGRESS EXAMS

- *Please return to your primary care veterinarian in 7-10 days for a progress exam. Healing of the new urethral opening will be evaluated, sutures (if present) will be removed, and any questions you have or tests needing follow-up will be addressed. Your pet may need to be sedated to have sutures removed as they are in a typically very sensitive location.*

LONG TERM LIFESTYLE

- *Pets with a permanent urethrostomy rarely have long term difficulty with urination. Sometimes male dogs may soil the inside of their legs when urinating if their stream is directed poorly. Pay close attention to the area around the new opening for the first 2 months to make sure moisture is not accumulating.*
- *It is recommended to keep the hair around the new opening trimmed close to prevent matting and soiling, especially in male cats. A small electric trimmer (like those used to trim mustaches and beards) can be helpful; trim every 2-3 months as needed to prevent problems.*
- *Excessive scarring or “stricture” may develop many months after surgery and require further evaluation and treatment. If you notice smaller than normal pools of urine, a weak urine stream or excessive straining to urinate, please have your pet evaluated by your veterinarian.*
- *Because the new urethrostomy is bypassing normal urethra that usually acts as a barrier to bacteria, pets with permanent urethrostomies are at higher risk for bladder infections. Your primary care veterinarian may recommend a routine for urine testing depending on your pet’s circumstances. Signs to look for that suggest bladder infection include: increased frequency of urination, an urgency to urinate, straining to urinate (i.e. squatting longer than usual), blood in the urine, excessive licking of the new urethral opening. Consult your primary care veterinarian if you notice these signs.*