



Caring for a surgical wound that involves stitches

Stitching a wound closed after surgery is common practice in veterinary science. Whilst routinely performed, it is very important to follow post-surgery instructions to allow your pet to heal well.

Tonight

When you pick up your pet today you may notice the following:

- Your pet may be more drowsy than normal due to the anaesthesia and pain relief medication administered. It is important that they be kept indoors tonight in a warm, quiet place where they can be monitored and allowed to rest. Please only offer your pet water and half of their usual meal tonight.
- your pet may have a small cotton band-aid on one of their fore (or occasionally hind) legs where access to the vein was obtained. Please remove this after 2 hours of picking them up from the clinic.
- The sutured wound may appear mildly bruised or there may be slight bleeding from the wound. **It is not normal however for the wound to continuously drip blood or for there to be bleeding or bruising developing elsewhere on the body.** These findings could indicate a clotting/bleeding disorder. If this is noted please contact the clinic immediately.

Day 1

- Please start the medication/s as directed on the label/s.

Day 12-14

- Please revisit the clinic for assessment of healing of the wound and to determine whether the stitches or staples are ready to be removed and if your pet is allowed to return to their normal activity.

Wound care

It is very important that your pet's wound be well cared for to allow optimal healing and prevent potential complications like infection or break down of the wound. This can be done by following the subsequent steps until the wound is confirmed to be healed at the revisit.

- Do not allow your pet to lick or chew at their surgical wound. We recommend your pet wears an Elizabethan collar if they are or noted to do so. This can be purchased from the clinic. This should be left on at all times until the revisit except when eating and drinking. If your pet needs to eat and drink at a time when you will be unable to monitor them, placing the food and water bowls on top of a brick or other small elevated platform that the Elizabethan collar can fit over may allow them access to their bowls more easily.
- It is not recommended to cover the wound with any dressings at home or apply any creams or lotions to the wound unless instructed to by your veterinarian. If the wound has been bandaged by your veterinarian, the bandage must be kept clean and dry at all times.
- Usually a revisit to the clinic to change the bandage is required in 3-4 days-time, please confirm this with your veterinarian. However, if a bandage slips, tightens, becomes wet or dirty or is chewed a revisit is required immediately to prevent complications.
- Do not bathe your pet or allow them to swim or get wet until otherwise instructed.
- Keep your pet quiet and refrain from walking them except for on the lead for 5 minutes at a time to allow them to toilet. Prevent free play and running until the wound is confirmed to be healed. If your pet is usually active it may be necessary to confine them to a small area such as the bathroom or laundry. Please prevent your pet from jumping (e.g. into cars, up onto beds and couches) as this may stretch the abdominal wound.

Problems to monitor for

In most cases with good aftercare no complications will develop. However, it is important to monitor for the following concerns:

- Vomiting, diarrhoea or straining to go to the toilet.
- Being very dull and listless
- Very pale pink or white gums
- Not starting to eat or drink the day following surgery
- Redness, swelling, lumps or severe bruising around the surgical wound on the tummy
- More than a few drops of blood or clear fluid from the surgical wound or any pus from the wound
- Redness, swelling or discharge on the leg where the band-aid was located
- Opening up of the surgical wound

If any of these are noted or you have any other concerns at all, please do not hesitate to contact the clinic on 0401 721 032 to chat to one of our nurses or vets. If you have any concerns outside of clinic hours, please contact the Animal Emergency Centre in Hallam on 03 8795 7020.

Please make an appointment for your pet's revisit with our reception staff at discharge or by calling us. We all look forward to seeing you and your pet in 7 days.