

Post Operative Pain Management

If your pet is having surgery, you are probably concerned with how pain will affect them.

Every patient is different, so we try to tailor each patient's pain medication protocol to maximize successful treatment without creating problems or exacerbating existing ones.

It is possible that you have been treating your pet's condition with pain medications or anti-inflammatory medications prior to surgery. Please ask if you should continue these before and/or after surgery during your appointment. It is possible that we will use or add on to existing pain medications, or increase the dose following surgery for a short time. Some medications may be stopped during the post operative period and then started again a few weeks after surgery. Some we may change altogether. All of these changes and the reasoning behind them will be discussed with you.

Before surgery, a premedication is given to help relax your pet for anesthesia. This helps decrease the amount of other drugs necessary to induce and maintain anesthesia. It also helps by targeting pain transmitters before surgical pain even happens. This helps make pain much more treatable during and after surgery.

After surgery, it is likely your pet will stay with us overnight for continued monitoring to make sure pain is well controlled. Also, with all of the different medications that are used for anesthesia, sometimes pets can experience dysphoria; we want to ensure that when you take your pet home, that the majority of the negative effects of anesthesia and the injectable pain medications have had time to stabilize.

Nocita is a long acting local pain medication that may be administered to your pet. It is injected into the surgery site, or by a nerve that provides sensory for the area where surgery occurred. The unique molecules do not move into the bloodstream and are not rapidly degraded, allowing for an average of 72 hours of local pain control. It does not affect behavior or the gastrointestinal tract like many pain medications do, so we can hopefully get patients back to eating, drinking, moving around and feeling generally comfortable relatively quickly.

Sometimes, an epidural may be given. This is an injection into the space around the spinal cord, causing numbness and pain control over the part of the body serviced by the part of the spinal cord that is in the area of the injection. The effects of these injections can last up to about 24 hours.

Other injectable pain medications may be given, either IV or under the skin. These medications are from several different classes, including opioids and anti-inflammatories. Oral medications like gabapentin and anti-inflammatories may also be given, and are likely to be sent home if your patient is able to tolerate them.

Novel approaches to painful pets have been on the rise over the last few years. There are constant infusion wearable devices, laser treatments and stem cell injections, just to name a few. We are always open to new ways to make our patients as pain free as possible.

Information adapted from Veterinary Surgery: Small Animal, Second Edition, Elsevier Inc, 2018.