

## MY PET REQUIRES SURGERY FOR CANCER: What can I expect?



Virtually all cancer patients have surgery at some point. This may be just to get a small piece of the tumour for diagnosis and other tests (biopsy) all the way up to a curative surgery to remove all the cancer with wide margins requiring reconstruction or removal of a body part. Rest assured, whatever surgery is planned, you will be fully advised of the procedure, the benefits and risks of the procedure and above all, our surgical oncologists will ensure your pet receives the best pain prevention and pain management program available.

Sometimes surgery is used in combination with other treatments like chemotherapy and radiation. Usually these other treatments are started about 2 weeks after surgery once healing is well underway. Our oncologists will also council you and provide the most effective treatments with the lowest risks of untoward side effects. You will receive written estimates of costs and no treatment will proceed without your full understanding and permission.

If your pet has had a cancer removed from inside the abdomen or chest cavity, a period of at about two weeks rest will be required. Drugs to prevent pain will be administered and our oncologists are very good at ensuring your pet is comfortable. Your pet may sleep a little more and have slightly lower energy levels for a week or so after surgery. The duration of this recovery period will vary depending on the procedure and general health status of your pet at the time of surgery. Running, jumping and boisterous activity are to be avoided if possible during the early recovery period but we aim to get your pet back to full activity as early as we can. In most cases bathing can be performed safely after seven to ten days.

Our complication rate with most cancer surgeries is low however some surgeries carry higher risks than others and you will be fully apprised of these risks. In the vent of any problems we can offer prompt care as BVSC is open twenty four hours a day and seven days a week. If you have any concerns after surgery a phone call to the hospital can get you immediate help. We would much rather address false alarm calls rather than deal with serious complications that could have been avoided easily if treated early. So the complete care we offer gives you peace of mind and you know help is only a phone call away.

If your pet had a large lump removed an accumulation of fluid may occur under the skin at the surgery site. This is called a **seroma**. A seroma is an accumulation of fluid (serum) which has leaked from cut tissue and small blood vessels. Seromas are not infected. Most small seromas resolve over one to two weeks as the body resorbs the fluid. If a seroma is very large, or if the veterinarian's expects that a large seroma is likely to form post-operatively, the surgeon may place a **drain** at the site to allow the seroma fluid to drain away. Drains are usually made from latex rubber (Penrose drain) or soft plastic (active drain). **Suction** or **active** drains apply a vacuum, which is very efficient at removing fluid. Drains are usually kept in for about three days but, if a

seroma is persistent, it may be maintained for longer. If your pet has a suction drain he or she will stay in hospital for the whole time the drain is in. If your pet has a Penrose drain he or she will usually go home for a short time and return to have it removed. Removing the drain is straightforward and usually does not require anaesthesia or sedation.

Wound breakdown after surgery occurs from time to time. Most commonly it is associated with the pet licking at the suture line. Covering suture lines with bandages or dressings helps to protect the wound. Often Elizabethan collars are used. An Elizabethan collar is a light plastic cone placed over the pet's head and is designed to keep your pet from licking the wound. These are usually effective in protecting healing incisions. They are kept on until the stitches come out. Most animals do adapt quite quickly to wearing them though they never seem to learn to make allowances for their width when walking through doorways or past your leg!

Suture removal after surgery usually occurs at about ten days post-op. This is done in the consulting room at a revisit and gives the surgeon an opportunity to assess your pet's general health and the healing of the surgery site. Occasionally the decision may be made to leave sutures in for longer if the incision line is not adequately healed. In most cases your pet can return to normal activity after suture removal. If radiation therapy or chemotherapy is required as part of your pet's therapy, it will usually commence at fourteen days post-op to allow adequate time for wound healing.

### **Financing surgical treatment for your pet.**

At BVSC, we understand that surgical treatments are often unexpected and costly. To assist you with this financial burden we facilitate your access to third party external finance companies. Our front desk staff will gladly help you apply on line at the time of your visit or you may call our reception team for assistance in this regard at any time.

### **Where is BVSC and how do I make an appointment for my pet?**

BVSC is located on Brisbane's north side on the corner of Old Northern & Keong Roads, Albany Creek 4035. A printable map is available ([click here](#)).

To make an appointment contact our friendly reception staff on **(07) 3264 9400**