



Post-operative care for patients after thoracic surgery

Thoracic surgery is never minor surgery. Indications are various but include removal of lung lobes, removal of foreign bodies & occasionally tumours, surgery on the great vessels around the heart, removal of part of the fibrous sac in which the heart sits and the repair of airway trauma.

It is extremely unlikely that your pet will be discharged for a few days, until we are confident that all is well and that breathing is normal. A chest drain will have been used by us for the early post-operative period to ensure that the lungs stay inflated. However this will always have been removed before discharge, leaving an exit wound high on the chest wall. This exit wound closes rapidly once the chest drain is removed, but some minor discharge may be seen from this site for a day or two.

Any breathing difficulties should be viewed as an ACUTE EMERGENCY. [Seek our advice immediately.](#)

Feeding tubes are very likely to have been placed into the stomach where the thoracic surgery was to remove a foreign body from the oesophagus. [Please refer to the separate fact sheet relating to feeding tubes.](#)

Medication:

- Antibiotics:** We usually dispense antibiotics like claviseptin (tablets given twice daily).
- Anti-inflammatories:** We usually dispense carprofen (tablets given twice daily), or meloxicam (a liquid given once daily). These are given with food. They occasionally cause vomiting or diarrhoea, in which case prompt advice should be sought.
- Analgesics:** We may have dispensed tramadol, (tablets given twice daily) for dogs or buprenorphine (liquid given every 8 hours by mouth) for cats.

The wound must not be interfered with or bathed. An Elizabethan collar can help prevent interference with wounds. Any ooze may be gently blotted with kitchen towel, but if ooze is seen, advice should be sought.

Rechecks a few days after surgery may be with your own vet to save un-necessary travelling. We could do this check-up where travelling is not an issue, and all post-op check-ups are free of charge with us under our "fixed price" schemes. Please contact us to book an appointment for us to see the case back 2-3 weeks post-operatively when we can remove sutures/staples and check that all is going to plan.

Dressings may be used post-operatively, typically a thin white Primapore, to give the wound(s) some on-going protection. These should be kept dry at all times. If they do become significantly wet then they can be removed.

Strict restriction and supervision of activity is required. Dogs should be on a lead anywhere outside of the house including the garden. Allow just 5 minutes of lead restricted exercise, three times a day, until you are advised to the contrary. Cats should be confined to a cage. Cages which will fold flat when not in use are readily available from pet superstores, Argos, many DIY stores or from on-line retailers. Cats can be allowed several short periods of supervised walking around the kitchen each day. For both species, running / jumping / climbing (into cars, upstairs, onto furniture, onto kitchen work tops etc) should be prevented. Consider using stair gates and ramps, and ensure that doors and windows are shut to avoid escapes!

For further advice please contact us by phone on 07944 105501 or at mail@wm-referrals.com