



Post-operative care for patients after vascular ring anomaly surgery

Vascular ring anomalies are obstructions of the oesophagus at the level of the heart that result from abnormal major blood vessels and remnants of major blood vessels from before/around the time of birth. Thoracic surgery is never minor surgery.

Vascular ring anomalies usually become apparent when the patient is a few weeks old, when they struggle to cope with semi solid or solid food as they are weaned. They typically regurgitate food and may cough.

Surgery involves thoracotomy (opening the chest cavity) to cut the tissues that are obstructing the oesophagus. The oesophagus forwards of the obstruction will be “ballooned” (megaesophagus). This persists long term and usually requires life-long management. The major long term consequence of megaesophagus is a risk of aspiration pneumonia – lung infection and inflammation resulting from the breathing in of regurgitated food material. This is potentially life threatening.

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 might have been placed into the stomach in case there is a need for these to get food into the stomach while by-passing the oesophagus post-operatively. 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 may 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)

The wounds 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. Cages which will fold flat when not in use are readily available from pet superstores, Argos, many DIY stores or from on-line retailers. Patients can be allowed several short periods of supervised walking around the kitchen each day. 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!

Our fixed prices include any follow up consults and x-rays done with us, but don't include further medication or revision surgery. For further details please see www.wm-referrals.com, “about us”, “FAQs”. Consults, dressings, x-rays and drugs from your usual vet will be chargeable. For further advice please contact us on 07944 105501 or at mail@wm-referrals.com. Consider texting/emailing pictures.

