

# Septic Abdomen Aftercare Information

Susan Hodge, DVM, DACVS- SA

Date of Surgery: \_\_\_\_\_

**Procedure Performed:** Infection of the abdominal cavity:

- Ruptured intestine due to mass, ulcer, or foreign body
- Penetrating object from the outside

Nausea is common following General Anesthesia, in case of nausea:

- **FOOD AND WATER:** Large intakes of food and water following a hospital visit are common due to the excitement of returning home. This type of vomiting can often be eliminated by not allowing access to food or water for 2 hours after returning home.
  - o A bland/special diet may be recommended, the length of time will depend on the type of surgery that has been performed. For orthopedic or neurologic surgery the bland diet may only be needed for a few days, following intestinal surgery, the special diet may be needed for up to a couple of weeks.
  - o Following any nausea or intestinal surgery, food and water is recommended in small amounts every 4-6 hours for a few days, then the volume can be increased and the frequency of meal feedings can be decreased to what is more normal.

A bland diet such as Eukanuba Low Residue, Hill's I/D, or Royal Canine Intestinal diets can be purchased or a home-made diet can be made with a 50:50 mixture of a cooked protein source such as hamburger, turkey, chicken, or cottage cheese (all fat removed) combined with a carbohydrate source such as rice, pasta, or mashed potato. We recommend gradually mixing the regular diet into this bland diet during the first week home.

## Medications:

- Fentanyl patch** (sizes available include 12, 25, 50, 75, & 100 ug patches): This is a clear plastic patch applied to your pet's skin for relief of discomfort or pain control. You will be instructed on when to remove the patch from your pet's skin (usually the date it should be removed will be noted). In most pets, the effects of this patch will work for about 3-5 days total (average of 4 days). It can be disposed of in two ways only, either place the patch in a plastic bag and return it to the office that dispensed it to you for disposal, or fold it in half, and flush it down the toilet. Do not allow pets or people to lick, eat or chew the patch because this may result in intoxication. The effects of the patch take 12-24 hours to either start to work or for the effects of the patch to wear off. Other medications can be used with the patch in place if needed and instructions on adjusting doses should be provided for you.
- Pain relieving medications: **Tramadol 50 mg**: The dose will be given in terms of the number of tablet(s) or partial tablet needed to be administered by mouth and the frequency will be noted for you (either every 8, or 12 hours) for 10-14 days as needed for pain control. This medication is an opioid and may cause sedation, mild constipation, or a decreased appetite. These side effects are related to the dose of the medication. Please call your doctor if you have concerns about any side effects. If a Fentanyl patch has been applied to your pet, this medication may not be needed until the patch has been removed, however it can be started with the Fentanyl patch at half the recommended dose (unless already at ¼ tablet dose) if needed. Please call if you have additional questions or concerns.  The first doses are due about 8-12 hours after removal of the Fentanyl patch OR  The time of the next dose that this medication is due will be noted on your discharge instructions (\_\_\_\_\_ am/pm).

- ( ) **Antacids** such as Pepcid AC (Famotidine) or Zantac (Ranitidine) may be recommended: The dose will be given in terms of the number of tablet(s) needed to be administered by mouth and the frequency will be noted for you (either every 12 or 24 hours) for 5-7 days. This is an acid reducing medication which can be purchased over-the-counter in any pharmacy, drug store, or grocery store. The time of the next dose that this medication is due will be noted on your discharge instructions (am/pm).
- ( ) **Anti-vomiting** medications such as Metoclopramide (Reglan) or Cerenia (Maropitant): The dose will be given in terms of the number of tablet(s) needed to be administered by mouth and the frequency will be noted for you (either every 8, 12, or 24 hours) for 3-5 days. This is an anti-vomiting medication. The time of the next dose that this medication is due will be noted on your discharge instructions (am/pm).
- ( ) **Other: Antibiotics** may be administered if needed, depending on the case. The dose will be given in terms of the number of tablet(s)/capsule(s) needed to be administered by mouth and the frequency will be noted for you (either every 12 or 24 hours) for the appropriate number of days. Antibiotics would be used to prevent infection or treat contamination noted at the time of surgery. Any antibiotic may cause nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea. Most side effects can be minimized by administering the medication with food. The time of the next dose that this medication is due will be noted on your discharge instructions (am/pm).
- ( ) **Other:** Other medications may be added as deemed necessary.

**Exercise:** Limit activity for the next 3 weeks. Your pet should be kept in a crate, playpen, or confined to a small space at all times unless under direct supervision for the first 3 weeks. No jumping, running, or rough-housing with other pets or people. Unrestricted activity may result in more pain, break down of the abdominal incision, or other complications.

- ( ) Short walks are permitted on a leash only (10 minutes maximum). Do not leave your pet off the leash or unattended outside during the time of exercise restriction.

For Cats:

- ( ) Please do not let your pet outside during recovery.
- ( ) LITTER PAN – Use shredded paper or Yesterdays News for litter for 2-3 weeks.

( ) **LAB /BIOPSY RESULTS:** Results of the submitted samples should return in 5-7 days time. Dr. Hodge will call you with these results, but please call if you have not heard from her in 7 days. A copy of these results will be sent to your regular veterinarian after review.

**Incision:** Please check the incision for signs of problems including: redness, swelling, pain, discharge, opening, or loss of sutures/staples. Please call if any of these are noted. Do not allow your pet to lick at the incision. Please obtain an Elizabethan collar from us, your regular veterinarian, or a pet supply store to prevent licking at the incision. Other options to deter licking the incision include: application of bitter apple solution (purchased from a pet supply store) around the incision several times per day, or place a t-shirt or boxer shorts on your pet depending on the location of the incision and their tolerance of these pieces of clothing.

- ( ) There are no external staples/sutures to be removed, but the incision should still be checked.
- ( ) There are staples/sutures that need to be removed in about 10-14 days.

( ) **SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:** Your pet is recovering from a very serious, systemic infection and major surgery. You may notice swelling in the limbs, neck, along the underbelly, and/or along the incision following surgery. The swelling is related to both low blood protein levels and inflammation, both of which cause blood vessels to be leaky resulting in the noted pitting edema. This edema will worsen if they are allowed to lay around too much and are not encouraged to get up and move around. It is also more likely to develop in dependant locations such as distal limbs and ventral aspects of the body.

- Tips on handling pitting edema:

- We recommend helping your pet to get up and walk around for short periods. The time of these walks can be longer as they improve, but may initially be just getting up and walking around a single room.
- Warm compresses applied to the area for 10-15 minutes can increase circulation. We recommend using a warm wash cloth placed in a baggie which is comfortable to your hand.
- Gentle, tickle-like massage of the area. If the limbs are swollen, we recommend working gently from the toes up the limb towards the body. We do not recommend massaging these areas, so if you are leaving finger impressions in the limb or area, you are applying too much pressure to the edema which can damage the tissue.

\*\*\*\* PLEASE RETURN your pet for an incision check (staple removal) in 10-14 days.