

The Canine Spay

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is the “Canine Spay”?

The canine spay, or ovariohysterectomy, is a form of surgical sterilization for the female dog and involves the surgical removal of both the ovaries and the uterus. It is a very commonly performed procedure, used to permanently prevent pregnancy and certain diseases caused by the influences of the female hormones. Although common, the canine spay is considered to be a major surgical procedure, requiring general anesthesia, aseptic operating room conditions, and detailed patient monitoring throughout the surgery and post-operative period.

2. Why is it important to have my female dog spayed?

- **Pregnancy prevention:** Without the presence of the female reproductive organs (ovaries and uterus), it is not possible for a female dog to become pregnant. As female hormones are no longer produced by the ovaries, there are no heat cycles or associated bloody vaginal discharge. Spayed females do not attract male dogs, helping to keep both females and males safe by reducing wandering behavior.
- **Prevention of mammary (breast) cancer:** A female dog spayed before her first heat (around 6 months of age) will have a near zero chance of developing mammary cancer. The risk increases the longer a female dog remains unspayed.
- **Prevention of pyometra:** “Pyometra” is a life threatening infection of the uterus which generally occurs in middle-aged and older female dogs during the six week period following her heat cycle. Despite the critical nature of this illness, the only treatment is emergency surgery to remove the ovaries and uterus.

3. Will my dog have any side effects if she is spayed?

- Your dog will not experience a personality change, even in the absence of female hormones. She will be the same, fun loving and obedient youngster that she was before surgery.
- Because the absence of female hormones can cause a “new balance” in her metabolism, there is sometimes a tendency for females to gain weight in the months and years following the spay surgery. It simply becomes more important to monitor and balance daily calorie intake and exercise.
- In rare instances, a spayed female dog may develop urinary incontinence in the months or years following surgery. This condition is easily treated with medication and/or hormone replacement therapy.

4. What will my dog’s surgical experience be like?

Your dog will receive caring, individualized attention throughout her stay with us. Her comfort and safety are our primary concerns.

Anesthesia, pain management, and safety

- Pain medication will be given by injection here in the hospital. An oral form of this medication will be sent home for use during the post-operative period.
- Inhalation anesthesia, the safest type available, will be used during surgery. Her vital signs will be monitored throughout the entire procedure and through recovery by an attending technician. In addition, our electronic monitoring equipment gives us a constant stream of data to assure the ideal plane of anesthesia.
- An intravenous (IV) catheter will be placed in one of your dog's veins, usually in the front leg.

Surgery

- The spay surgery is performed in our surgical suite, under aseptic conditions.
- The underside of your dog's abdomen will be shaved.
- The ovaries and uterus will be removed and the incision will be closed with sutures buried under the skin.

Recovery

- Once your dog's surgery is finished we will monitor her recovery and be sure she is quiet and pain free. She will be ready to go home later in the afternoon. The attending veterinarian will call you as soon your dog is awake. A time for her discharge in the afternoon will be arranged. You will have time to ask any questions you may have, and will receive her pain medication and discharge instructions.
- Some patients benefit from wearing an Elizabethan collar to keep them from licking the incision. The surgical area will take 12-14 days to heal. Please do not bathe her or allow her to swim for these two weeks after the surgery.

Along with regular examinations, vaccinations, premium nutrition, and regular exercise, spaying is a very important part of your female dog's preventive health program. Please feel free to call us at any time with any questions or concerns. We would be happy to help!