

# Spaying Your Cat

## Why should I have my cat spayed?

This procedure (called ovariohysterectomy) consists in surgical removal of the ovaries and uterus. It is recommended for several reasons. From a health standpoint, females that are not spayed run a higher risk of many diseases including ovarian cancer, mammary gland (breast) cancer, and pyometra (a life threatening infection of the uterus). From a community and animal welfare standpoint, spaying eliminates the risk of unwanted kittens, and contributes to reducing unwanted pets, avoiding euthanasia of healthy animals and potential cases of animal cruelty.

## When should I have my cat spayed?

We recommend that female cats be spayed at 6 months of age so that they are mature enough to be anesthetized safely, but young enough that they haven't experienced their first heat. Cats older than 6 months can still be spayed and reduction of future health risk can still be achieved.

## How does it work?

You need to make an appointment for your cat's surgery approximately 2-3 weeks in advance. The night before the surgery, remove her food at 9 PM, but always leave water available to her. Bring your cat to the Hospital between 8:00 and 8:30 the day of the surgery. You will meet a veterinary technician who will weigh her, do a physical exam, offer pre-operative testing and have you sign a consent form for the surgery. She can also answer any questions or concerns you may have. Please inform the technician if your cat may be pregnant or if she is in heat. For the protection of your cat and every pet in the hospital, all patients must be up to date for vaccinations prior to routine surgery.

## The operation

After admitting her, we will give your cat a sedative so that she can be safely and comfortably handled. After the sedative has taken effect (approximately 20 minutes), she will receive an intravenous anesthetic which will make her sleep deep enough and just long enough for us to put a breathing tube in her trachea (wind pipe). The tube delivers gas anesthetic and oxygen to the patient to keep her soundly asleep and well oxygenated during the procedure. The patient also receives a pain medication injection before the surgery begins.

Once she is asleep with the tube securing her airway, we put her on her back and shave her abdomen before washing it with an antiseptic soap. Afterward we bring her to the operating room, install monitoring equipment and do a final disinfection of the abdominal skin while the surgeon is scrubbing and putting on a sterile surgical mask, gown and gloves. Before making the incision, the surgeon puts sterile drapes around the surgical site, so that only the disinfected skin is showing.

The surgery itself will take approximately 20-40 minutes, depending on your cat's age, size and status of her uterus. When the surgery is over, we stop the anesthetic gas flow, and monitor your cat closely until she wakes up enough to have the breathing tube removed and she is able to swallow again. Then we bring her to a recovery cage.

When all the surgeries of the day are complete, we will call you to give you an update on how the procedure went and set up an appointment for you to come pick her up. When you come to pick her up, you will meet with a technician who will discuss the after care instructions with you.

## After care

There shouldn't be any vigorous activity for at least 14 days after the surgery. Excessive activity levels increase the risk of post-surgical complications and can delay the healing process. Since the sutures are all under the skin and will dissolve with time, there is no need to come in to have sutures removed. Check the incision every day for swelling or discharge, and call us if you have any concerns.

If your cat licks her incision excessively, it is very important that you come to the clinic to get her an Elizabethan collar to stop her from opening or infecting her incision.

