



### External Mass Removal Surgery

Mass removals are a very common procedure in veterinary medicine. The details of a mass removal vary widely depending on location of the mass, size of the mass and type of mass. Prior to removal of a mass, your veterinarian may have performed or recommended either a fine needle aspirate or punch biopsy to try and diagnose the mass before removal. Some masses require that we take large margins, meaning removing a few centimeters around the visible mass, for best chances at removing the entire mass. If the mass is suspicious for cancer, your veterinarian may perform additional diagnostics to stage the cancer (or look for spread) via chest x-rays and abdominal ultrasound. Your veterinarian will also recommend that the entire mass be submitted for biopsy. This will both confirm the diagnosis and tell us if the entire mass was removed.

#### **Mass Removal Procedure**

Your pet will be placed under general anesthesia. An area around the mass or masses will be shaved and sanitized. The mass will be removed based on recommended margins to the best of our ability. Stitches will be placed to close the area. The incision that your pet will have will be longer than the original mass in most cases. If your pet's mass was large, your pet may also have a drain placed. This helps to relieve fluid build-up that occurs when a large space is left behind.

#### **Complications**

For most mass removals, if proper care is taken, there are minimal complications.

**Location:** If your pet's mass is in a tight/high motion location, such as on a leg (especially if near the knee or elbow) or near the armpit, opening (dehiscence) of stitches is more of a risk. These areas have less extra skin and move a lot, which can strain the stitches. A bandage will be placed, if possible, to limit motion, and keeping your pet confined is of utmost importance. Bandage changes and post-operative incision care can be extensive in these cases.

**Incision:** Swelling, bruising, infection and dehiscence (opening of stitches) are a possible complication. These can be minimized by keeping your pet strictly rested and keeping the incision clean during the recovery period. If your pet allows, you can also ice there incision for 10 minutes twice daily for the first three days following surgery, then move to warm compressing for 10 minutes twice daily for the remainder of the recovery period.

**Recurrence:** While your veterinarian will do their best to remove the mass with full margins, either due to location or due to the aggressiveness of the tumor, some tumors may have small or incomplete margins. These masses may require a second surgery or other types of control (IE. chemotherapy).

#### **Recovery and Homecare**

After your pet's mass removal, they will need to remain rested for 2 weeks to allow the area to heal. As mentioned above, this is especially important for high risk areas, such as limbs. Your pet will need to remain quiet in the house or in a crate, and only go outside on a leash for potty purposes. Your pet may need anti-anxiety or sedative medications to help with this rest, please let us know if these are needed. Your pet will be sent with a cone. This must be worn at all times to prevent self-traumatizing the incision. Your pet will learn to eat, drink and navigate with the cone on.

If your pet had a drain placed, you will need to wipe the area once to twice daily using a gentle damp cloth to keep the area clean. Icing of the incision for the first 48 hours twice daily for 10 minutes can help with swelling and discomfort. You will monitor your pet's incision twice daily for any significant swelling, redness, heat, discharge or opening up. If any of these occur, be sure to alert your veterinarian right away.

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