



## Splenectomy

A splenectomy is the removal of the spleen. The spleen is a long oval shaped abdominal organ. A splenectomy is most often recommended due to a mass on the spleen that may be causing bleeding. Because of the amount of blood cells and blood vessels in the spleen, rapid, life-threatening bleeding can occur. Masses on the spleen can be benign hematomas (blood blisters) or malignant tumors. Unfortunately, this diagnosis can typically only be obtained once the entire spleen is sent to the lab for biopsy. However, your veterinarian may recommend chest x-rays, abdominal ultrasound or fine needle aspirate to try and determine signs of spread prior to surgery, if possible.

### **Splenectomy Procedure**

This procedure is often performed on an emergency basis, due to the risk of bleeding to death from the spleen. Your pet will be placed under general anesthesia and sterile surgical technique will be used. A long incision will be made on the belly to allow access to the abdomen. Your veterinarian will first examine all of the abdominal organs, including the spleen. The spleen will then be removed by clamping off all of the vessels that supply it. If other organs appeared abnormal, your veterinarian may take biopsies of those organs. The belly will then be sutured closed.

### **Complications**

The most common complication of splenectomy is bleeding. This can occur before, during or after surgery and often requires blood transfusion. For this reason, your pet will often either have this surgery performed at PETS Hospital or will be transferred to PETS Hospital after surgery for 24 hour post-operative care.

Less common, but severe complications of splenectomy include heart arrhythmias and blood clots. After splenectomy, your pet will be monitored at PETS Hospital for 1-2 days for signs of arrhythmia and bleeding. Unfortunately, there are no tests to predict blood clots. Either of these complications, if detected, can sometimes be treated. However, they sometimes occur quickly and can cause sudden death.

If your pet's splenic mass is determined to be cancerous, your veterinarian will discuss referral to an oncologist to discuss other options, such as chemotherapy. However, these tumors are often very aggressive and your pet's prognosis may be poor.

### **Recovery and Homecare**

After your pet's splenectomy, they will need to be confined in the home or crate and taken out on a leash for bathroom breaks only for 2 weeks to allow the incision and the splenic removal areas to heal. Your pet will also require a cone during that time to prevent licking and self-trauma to the incision site. You can also ice the incision area twice daily for 10 minutes for the first 48 hours after surgery to decrease swelling. After 48 hours, a warm compress can be applied to the areas twice daily for 10 minutes to remove any swelling that occurred.

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