



## North Bay Animal Hospital

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## Spaying in Dogs

### Why should I have my dog spayed?

We recommend spaying all female pets. The benefits to your pet's health and to help reduce the pet overpopulation crisis make this decision easier. It should be remembered that owners of Guide Dogs for the Blind, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and Dogs for the Disabled routinely have their dogs spayed and this does not affect their ability to perform their duties in any manner whatsoever.

### What are the advantages of spaying in the female dog?

- Prevention of "heat" or estrus
- When in "heat", the female experiences an urge to escape in order to find a mate. This unwanted and dangerous behavior is eliminated.
- Elimination of the hormone fluctuations that cause false pregnancy following the "heat cycle"
- Prevention of uterine infection known as *pyometra*
- Prevention of breast cancer. Dogs spayed before their first "heat" have less than 0.5% chance of developing breast cancer.
- Elimination of the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer

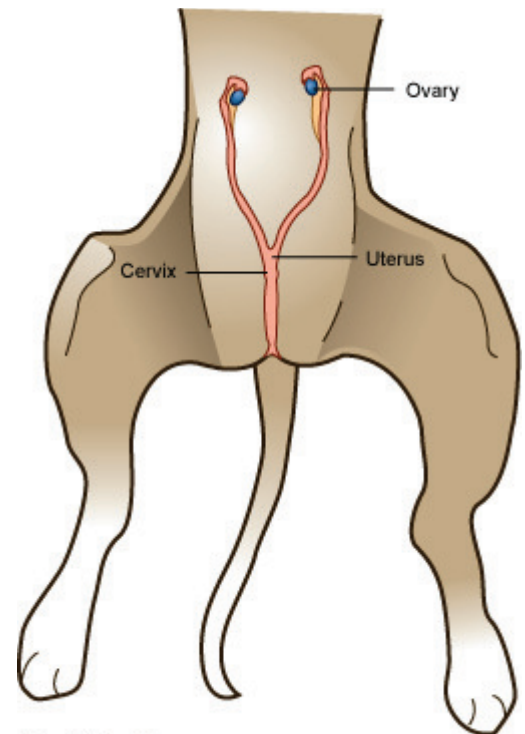
### Is spaying performed for any other reason?

The operation may be performed for several medical conditions. These include:

- Treatment of intractable false or phantom pregnancy
- Treatment of irregular or abnormal cycles due to ovarian cysts
- Treatment of uterine infection (pyometra) or cancer
- Dystocia (difficult birthing) or post caesarean-section surgery
- An aid to correction of certain behavioral abnormalities

### What are the disadvantages?

Most of the perceived disadvantages are false. The most quoted of these are that the dog will become fat, lazy, and useless as a guard dog. Obesity is probably the most commonly quoted disadvantage of spaying. Obesity is the result of overfeeding and lack of physical activity. The role of female hormones in preventing obesity is poorly understood. By regulating your dog's diet and caloric intake, you can prevent obesity in neutered or intact females.



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Spaying doesn't cause a change in personality, guarding instincts, intelligence, playfulness or affection.

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### **When should the operation be performed?**

Spaying is recommend spaying between six and eight months of age. Spaying at an earlier age, which is a common practice at animal shelters, does not appear to be detrimental.

### **Is there any alternative to surgery?**

Not at the present time, although there are several promising advances being made in this area, including the development of novel vaccines.

### **Are there any dangers associated with the operation?**

Spaying is considered a major operation and requires general anesthesia. With any anesthetic the risk of serious complications, including death, is always possible. With modern anesthetics and monitoring equipment, the risk of a complication is very low. It has been said that your pet has a greater chance of being injured in a car wreck than having an anesthetic or surgical complication.

### **What happens when I leave my dog for this procedure?**

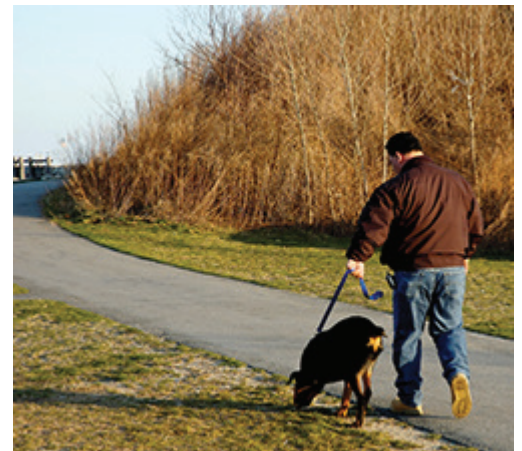
This major surgical procedure requires general anesthesia. You will need to fast your dog the night prior to surgery.

You will be asked to admit your dog into the hospital on the morning of her procedure. You will need to plan on approximately 10–15 minutes to allow for the signing of consent forms and admission by a registered veterinary technician (RVT). The RVT assigned to your pet will follow your dog through her entire stay in the hospital, assist the veterinarian during her surgery and look after all her nursing care during her stay.

Although the sedatives, anesthetics and medications we will be using are considered very safe, they do need to be processed and eliminated by your dog's system. The liver and kidneys are partially responsible for this processing.

To ensure your dog is in optimum health to process necessary medications and undergo the surgical procedure a few blood tests will be run to assess your dog's liver, kidneys, blood count and blood glucose levels. If there are any abnormalities in these results we will contact you immediately and any decisions about proceeding with the surgery will be discussed with your veterinarian.

After receiving conformation of normal blood results, your dog will be examined by the veterinarian and if deemed fit for surgery, will be given a mild sedative by injection to relax your dog. This sedative will take 10–15 minutes to be effective. At this time an intravenous catheter will be placed in a blood vessel in the front or hind leg. A small square of skin may be clipped to allow us to sterilize the area and visualize the vein for insertion of the catheter. This catheter will be used to



administer intravenous fluids during and after the surgery to ensure your dog is properly hydrated throughout the procedure and during her recovery. This also allows us to have immediate intravenous access should we need to add any medication during the procedure.

An injectable anesthetic (barbituate) is given through the intravenous line to initiate the general anesthetic. An endotracheal tube made of soft plastic is then inserted into the wind pipe to administer oxygen and a gas anesthetic, called isoflurane, to allow us to maintain your pet under general anesthesia for as long as necessary. While under anesthesia your pet will be breathing on her own but will not be awake. Your pet will not be able to feel the surgical procedure. Your dog's heart rate, blood oxygen level and blood pressure will be used to monitor her while asleep. The RVT assigned to your dog will assist the veterinarian during the entire procedure and during recovery. Her primary job will be to monitor and adjust the anesthetic on the veterinarian's direction.

A square of skin on the abdomen will be shaved and prepared with a series of disinfecting solutions to sterilize the skin surface. One of these is a bright pink colour and traces of this solution may persist on the skin when your dog goes home. The clipped hair may take 8–12 weeks or more to regrow.

All of the preparation is done in the "prep" area of the hospital and then your dog is then moved to the sterile surgery area where she will be placed on a cozy sheep skin blanket on a circulating warm water blanket that is temperature controlled. Heat loss and low body temperatures during and after an anesthetic is a concern, especially in pets under 10 kg. All patients are recovered in warm blankets in our recovery area.

The operation is performed through a relatively small incision made most commonly in the midline of the abdomen, just below the umbilicus (belly button). Both ovaries are removed along with the entire uterus. The surgical incision will be closed with several layers of dissolvable sutures. These sutures will be placed below the skin and will not be visible. They will be dissolved by the body in 2–3 weeks. The procedure will take 30–45 minutes.

To ensure a smooth transition from anesthetic and to maximally control for the possibility of post-operative discomfort, your dog will be given pain medication by injection. All dogs will receive an anti-inflammatory and a morphine-like narcotic. The veterinarian and the RVT will monitor your dog's recovery and adjust post-op medication when needed. Our goal is for your dog to always be pain free.

Once your dog is awake and able to walk, she will be returned to her kennel. Many veterinary hospitals release their surgical patients the same day, but we prefer to hospitalize them over night for a few reasons. Many pets are sleepy and disoriented after a general anesthetic procedure and are safest in a confined area where they can't harm themselves. For the first 12–24 hours after surgery we can monitor food and water intake and provide an easily digestible dog food that will minimize intestinal irritation (sort of like the bland crackers and gingerale you might have after surgery). The morning following the surgery we will have the opportunity to monitor your dog's temperature, examine the incision and ensure your dog is prepared to go home. You will be provided with medication to give at home that will aid in your dog continuing to be pain free during her recovery.

## Are there any post-operative precautions I should take?

"Rest and restriction of activity are the primary post-operative care you should provide."

Rest and restriction of activity are the primary post-operative care you should provide. Most dogs can resume normal activity five to ten days after surgery. Until then, leash walks, lots of rest, and no running or climbing stairs are the rule. Bathing and swimming are discouraged for the first 10 days after surgery.

## I have heard that letting my dog have one litter will calm her down.

There is no scientific evidence that having puppies has any calming psychological effect. This myth has no basis in fact.

## What things should I consider when shopping for a dog spay?

1. What kind of anesthetics will be used?
2. Are medications sent home with your dog for post-operative pain control?
3. Does the clinic employ RVTs to help with surgeries, anesthetic monitoring, and nursing care?
4. Are surgical patients provided with intravenous fluid therapy during their procedure?
5. Where is my dog kept during her hospital stay?
6. Will my dog be hospitalized overnight? Why or why not.
7. Is preanesthetic blood work recommended to ensure safety under general anesthetic? If not recommended why not?
8. What will happen if there are any post-operative complications?

*This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM*

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