

## Spay and Neuter Facts

### Learn the facts about spay and neutering dogs.

Female dogs are spayed by removing their reproductive organs, and male dogs are neutered by removing their testicles. The spay surgery, or ovariectomy, as your veterinarian may refer to it, is the most commonly performed surgery on companion animals in the United States. Removal of the testicles (neutering) is the most common form of sterilization in male dogs in the United States. In both cases, the operation is performed while your pup is anesthetized. The vast majority of dogs recover quickly, with no complications from anesthesia or surgery.

You'll need to withhold food and water the night before the surgery. This helps prevent vomiting and aspiration while the dog is anesthetized. Your veterinarian will alert you to anything else you need to do or know about before the surgery. Don't be afraid to ask questions beforehand. A good veterinarian is happy to address any concerns you might have, and you'll be more confident if you understand everything that will happen.

During the spay surgery, the veterinarian removes the ovaries and uterus. After your puppy is sedated and anesthetized (so she doesn't feel any pain or have any awareness of what's going on), the veterinarian makes a small incision in the belly area and removes the two ovaries and the uterus. Then the vet ties off blood vessels to prevent bleeding during the remainder of the procedure. This also reduces the risk of bleeding or infection after the surgery.

When the surgery is completed, the incision is closed up with absorbable sutures (stitches that are absorbed by the body as the tissue heals), skin staples, surgical glue or regular stitches that can be removed 10 to 14 days after surgery.

The neuter surgery is a short and simple procedure. In most cases, the veterinarian makes an incision in the skin just above the scrotal sac, pulls out the testicles and ties off the spermatic cord, which contains the vas deferens (ducts that transport sperm) and vessels and nerves of the testes (testicles). Then the spermatic cord is cut and returned to its normal position inside the body. The testicles are removed and the incision is closed.

Sometimes the testicles are located inside the abdomen or within the tissues leading to the scrotum. This developmental defect is called monorchid if one testicle is retained and cryptorchid if both testicles are retained. When that's the case, the vet usually has to make an abdominal incision and look around for them; sometimes two incisions are necessary. The rest of the surgery is performed in much the same way as described above.

Most dogs can go home the same day after a spay or neuter surgery. Some veterinarians like to keep animals overnight so they can monitor their condition, but the choice is usually yours.

Next Step: Safety Concerns