

Spay and Neuter Facts

Learn the facts about spay and neutering dogs.

Most dogs recover quickly from a spay or neuter surgery — usually within a week. It's important to keep their activity levels low during the week after surgery. This helps ensure that the incision heals properly and doesn't tear or become infected.

"The dogs usually want to run around more than they ought to," Christine Wilford, D.V.M. says. "You can't keep them still, but limit jumping on and off the couch or off the deck anything that puts stress on the belly especially in a female."

The easiest way to limit your pup's activity is to keep it on a leash and at your side for the week following the surgery. When not leashed or otherwise under your supervision, the crate is the safest place for your puppy.

Don't be alarmed if your puppy has some swelling at the incision site. "Usually, if it's an absorbable suture, there might be swelling on the incision line, and that's not a problem," Wilford says. "Depending on the type of suture that's used, it can take weeks or even months for the swelling to go away, because the body has to break it [absorbable suture] down. When the vet uses a really nice, expensive suture that lasts six to eight weeks in the body, you're going to see more swelling on the suture line, especially in dogs with thin, delicate skin."

Often, male dogs will lick the incision site. The resulting dermatitis (skin inflammation) is common after neuter surgery. If this concerns you, ask the veterinarian for an Elizabethan collar (plastic, cone-shaped collar, resembling a lamp shade) to place around your dog's neck so it can't get at the area.

Next Step: When to Schedule Surgery