

## Postoperative Care Instructions for Thoracotomy

Your pet has had a procedure with North Peninsula Veterinary Surgical Group called a Thoracotomy. This open chest surgery was performed either as lateral thoracotomy between the ribs or a median sternotomy through the sternum. It is important to allow your pet time to heal, avoiding possible injury while they recover. Please keep this in mind and strictly follow the postoperative care instructions here.

### Activity

- Absolutely no running or jumping, unsupervised use of stairs, or playing roughly with any pets or children.
- All toileting and time outside must be done on-leash.
- Avoid access to slippery floors such as hardwood and stairs.
- Plan to restrict your pet's activity for the next 2 weeks. This includes very short walks on-leash three times a day for toileting purposes only.

### Incision Site

- Monitor the surgical site daily for infection. This can present as swelling, redness, discharge or signs of sudden pain to the touch. Call us immediately if you notice any of these.
- Discourage licking at the incision. Call us if you're struggling to control this behavior and we can supply an e-collar until the staples are removed.
- Keep the surgery site clean and dry. Do not apply any ointments or other treatments. No bathing or swimming for 14 days after the procedure.

### Medications

- Make sure you have a plan to give all medications as directed, including reminders where necessary. Call us if you believe your pet may be having a poor reaction to any of their medications.
- If your pet experiences a loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea or dark and tarry stool, call us immediately.

### Food & Water

- Your pet should have access to water at all times and can be fed their regular food.



### **Recovery Trajectory**

- You can generally expect your pet to have a slow but steady recovery. If you notice that your pet is lethargic, experiencing more pain or seems generally unwell, please call us immediately.
- You must monitor your pet's breathing during recovery. While we do not expect complications, surgery in this area can leave air in the chest cavity. This situation generally goes away on its own, but may occasionally lead to difficulty breathing. Signs include the gums turning blue. Immediately take your pet to a veterinarian as this is an emergency.

### **Follow-up Appointment**

- We will schedule a follow-up appointment to remove staples 10 to 12 days after the procedure.

We're here to help throughout your pet's recovery, please do not hesitate to call us with any questions or concerns.

