



Noah's Ark Animal Hospital

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Ovariohysterectomy ("spay")

The doctor has recommended that your female dog or cat undergo an ovariohysterectomy surgery, which is the surgical removal of both the uterus and ovaries. This surgery is also at times referred to as a "spay". Now that the doctor has made this recommendation, you are encouraged to schedule the procedure as soon as possible. Younger animals have less bleeding and recover from anesthesia quicker than older animals.

Why should I have my pet spayed?

Unfortunately many people think that the only reason to spay or neuter their pet is to prevent unwanted litters of kittens or puppies. Make no mistake, millions of pets are needlessly killed each year due to pet overpopulation and spaying/neutering is the only way to address this problem. We would never want to minimize the importance of this reason to spay/neuter, but are surprised how few people are ever made aware of the important health benefits that also come with having their pet spayed or neutered. Medical reasons to spay include:



- it reduces the chance of mammary (breast) cancer to less than 0.05% chance, **if performed before the first heat cycle** (spay after one heat cycle increases the chance to 10%, after two heat cycles the chance increases to 25% and after 2 ½ years of age, there is no protective benefit).
- it eliminates the risk of ovarian and uterine cancer
- it avoids a costly and potentially deadly uterine infection called a *pyometra*; a pet's chance of developing pyometra rises greatly with age, therefore **a pet is never too old to be spayed**
- it avoids annoying heat cycles that can be associated with vocalization and bleeding
- it eliminates the risk and spread of sexually transmitted diseases

As you can see, spaying and neutering your pet is not only the responsible thing to do but also has many health benefits as well.

At what age should this be done?

Pets can be safely spayed as young as 8-10 weeks of age as has been done for many years as part of some shelters' early spay/neuter programs. However, as we are dealing in most cases with animals that now have a permanent home, we recommend delaying this until just after the vaccine series is completed. For most pets this is around 4 months (16 weeks) of age. It is beneficial to schedule surgery as soon as possible after this as younger patients do better with the stress of surgery and anesthesia.

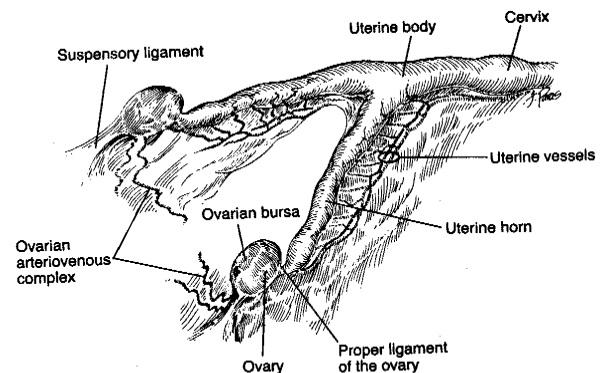
Myths about spaying and neutering

Unfortunately there is a large amount of misinformation about spaying and neutering. A few myths are listed below. Spaying/neutering your pet does not:

- cause laziness
- cause hyperactivity
- reduce a pet's instinct to protect your family and home
- cause "immature" behaviors
- postpone or delay normal behavioral maturity
- alter their personality in any manner

What exactly is done and is it painful?

A small incision is made to enter the lower abdomen where the ovaries and uterus are located. The blood vessels to each ovary are then tied with suture to prevent bleeding, and each connection is cut. The uterine body is tied off and cut, just in front of the cervix. The incision is then closed in three layers. In the third and outer layer, sutures are placed underneath the skin and because they dissolve over time, do not need to be removed following surgery. As with any surgery, there is some pain involved; however, we give pain medication before surgery, as well as pills (for dogs) to take at home for the first few days of recovery.



What do I need to do to prepare my pet?

It is important that anesthesia be administered on an empty stomach to reduce the risk of vomiting while under anesthesia and during the recovery period. For this reason, we ask that you take up your pet's food at 8:00 p.m. the night before surgery. Please allow your pet to have water at all times to avoid dehydration.

Be sure you have reviewed the handout on anesthesia before arriving the morning of surgery. Please arrive promptly at your scheduled appointment time and **allow 10-15 minutes of time for paperwork and decision making**. If you have reviewed the anesthesia handout you will be able to make informed decisions at this time. Please inform or remind the admitting nurse about any additional procedures that you wish to be completed while your pet is here (e.g. nail trimming, microchipping, lump removal, etc.).

Most procedures are done mid-day and early afternoon, allowing the morning to run any blood work, and/or administer presurgical calming medications. For elective surgeries/dentistries, **please call after 3:00 p.m. for updates and to schedule an end of day discharge for your pet** (usually between 4:00-5:00).

We will call you the night before your scheduled surgery/dental appointment, to confirm the date and to answer any questions you might have. In the meantime, please don't hesitate to call us with any questions about your pet's surgery!

_____ 's surgery is scheduled for _____, admission at _____ a.m.