

What to expect if your pet is having a procedure that requires sedation or general anesthesia.

Many pet owners understandably experience some anxiety when their pet is scheduled to have a procedure that requires heavy sedation or general anesthesia. We hope to ease that anxiety by providing you with information regarding the process starting from the night before until you arrive back home after your pet's procedure.

The night before the procedure:

After your pet has consumed dinner (and any medications he/she may already be on), do not need feed anything past 9pm. Keep water available for your pet until roughly 6am. If you pet is on medications that are normally given in the morning and you have not been informed as to whether or not to give them, please call one of our nurses at [919-226-0043](tel:919-226-0043) for morning medication instructions.

The morning of the procedure:

Drop off time is typically between 7 and 8 am. You will be asked to sign routine paperwork which includes an estimate for the procedure and a consent form. After checking in, a SPAH team member will come to the lobby to escort your pet to our treatment center.

Before the procedure (requiring either sedation or general anesthesia):

If not already completed, preanesthetic labwork will be run upon your pet's arrival to insure that there is no anemia present and basic blood chemistry values are within normal limits. After your veterinarian reviews and approves the labwork, your pet will receive either a sedative injection (if only sedation is

required) or a pre-medication injection (if general anesthesia is required). The pre-medication injection has several functions including helping to lower the total amount of anesthetic gas required during the procedure. If your pet is only receiving a sedative, the procedure would be completed roughly 20-30 minutes after administration of the drug.

General anesthesia:

If your pet is undergoing general anesthesia (necessary for dentistry and most surgical procedures) an intravenous catheter is placed roughly 20 minutes after the pre-medication. The catheter provides direct access to your pet's veins for fluid and drug administration. Once the catheter is in place, your pet receives another injection called an induction agent. The medication induces a brief state of anesthesia that allows us enough time to place an endotracheal tube into the trachea, or windpipe. Once the tube is in place, your pet will receive a mixture of anesthetic gas and oxygen so that an adequate level of anesthesia is achieved, allowing your veterinarian to complete the procedure (surgery or dentistry). During this time, your pet's vital parameters are continuously monitored with state of art equipment and by an anesthetist. The parameters monitored include blood pressure, electrocardiograph (ECG), pulse oximetry (blood oxygen level), end expired CO₂ (how much carbon dioxide is being properly expelled from the lungs), heart rate, respiratory rate and temperature. Additionally, our anesthetists are continually evaluating additional parameters (jaw tone and pupil appearance, for example) to insure the plane of anesthesia is neither too deep nor too light. Depending on what procedure your pet is receiving, shaving of fur will be necessary.

After the procedure:

Upon completion of the procedure, the anesthetic gas is turned off but your pet will continue to receive a high concentration of oxygen through the endotracheal tube. Once your pet has control of his/her airway, the tube is removed, additional medications are administered (if indicated) and the anesthetist remains with your pet until he/she is calm and fully recovered from anesthesia. At this point, you will receive a phone call letting you know how the procedure went and a dismissal appointment will be set up. Most all pets that receive general anesthesia go home on the day of the procedure. At the dismissal appointment, you will receive written instructions regarding food, water, any medications necessary, activity level restrictions, suture removal, etc. When your pet's procedure will be completed and the time of the dismissal appointment will vary depending on what other procedures are scheduled and whether or not there are any emergencies.

Upon returning home:

Your pet may be groggy for several hours and possibly into the next day. As in human medicine, older patients are typically slower to recover fully from anesthesia. Occasionally, a pet may develop loose stool or mild inappetence but these conditions are typically self-limiting and short in duration. It is important to follow the directions on your dismissal sheet and if any of the listed items of concern are observed, please call the hospital at [919-226-0043](tel:919-226-0043) to speak with a team member for guidance.

We hope that this article has been informative and has helped to ease any anxiety you have about your pet's upcoming procedure. Thank you for allowing Southpoint Animal Hospital to care for your precious family pet!
