

▲ Go now

*Emergency clinic if
your vet is closed*

ANY SURGERY

- Gums that take longer than three seconds to turn pink again, any change in gum color (white, pale, gray, blue, bright or brick red, or yellow), or a slow refill in a dog who's weak
- The incision has opened and you can see tissue, or anything is coming out of it (cover it with a clean, damp cloth, and don't push anything back in)
- Bleeding that won't slow after five minutes of steady, gentle pressure with a clean cloth
- A belly that's swollen (bigger than it was this morning) or hard, retching with nothing coming up, or vomiting over and over (more than three times in a day, or she can't keep water down)
- Early bloat in a big, deep-chested dog: an anxious look or looking back at her belly, drooling, or retching with nothing coming up, even before the belly looks swollen
- Vomiting blood, or vomit that looks like coffee grounds
- Straining to pee with no stream at all
- No urine in twenty-four hours
- Collapse, extreme weakness, she was standing and now can't even with help, or you can't wake her normally (needing a boost to get up after a TPLO or with stiff old joints is normal)
- Trouble breathing, or breathing that looks labored
- A temperature over 104°F, or over 103°F in a dog so dull or weak she barely responds
- A temperature under 98°F, or she's very dull with cold ears and paws and you can't get a reading
- A scrotal or incision swelling that grows fast over a few hours, or is turning black, breaking open or oozing
- A lump at the incision that turns hard and painful and doesn't shrink when she lies down (don't press on it), especially with vomiting (a trapped hernia)

How to check gums and temperature: page 3. After a specific surgery: pages 4 to 6.

Call your vet today

*Same day. After hours,
call the emergency
clinic*

ANY SURGERY

- Gums that take two to three seconds to turn pink again, if they're still a healthy pink and she's acting like herself
- Swelling that keeps growing after day three
- Any lump or swelling under or near the incision, squishy or hard (send your vet a photo or have it rechecked)
- Discharge that's thick, cloudy, yellow or green, smells bad, or is increasing
- Redness spreading outward from the incision, especially if it's warm
- A small gap where the edges have pulled apart, with no tissue showing
- Licking or chewing has left a gap, spreading redness or discharge
- Vomiting two or three times in a day, if she's keeping water down
- Not eating at all for twenty-four hours, or not drinking at all for twelve hours while she's awake
- No urine in twelve hours, with no straining
- Seems painful: hunching, crying, panting that won't stop, snapping when you're near the area (the first night, call tonight)
- No bowel movement after three days, or straining to poop
- Diarrhea that won't stop
- A temperature over 103°F, or under 99°F
- A temperature from 102.6 to 103°F or 99 to 99.9°F that's still there an hour later, or in a dog who seems off
- She just seems sick, dull or off, even though the incision looks fine
- Getting worse after the first day or two instead of better
- A cough that's getting worse instead of better
- A swollen paw below an IV wrap (unwind the tape, never cut toward the skin, and call if it's stuck)
- On an anti-inflammatory: vomiting, black tarry stool, not eating or unusual thirst (hold the next dose)
- So sleepy on a calming medicine that she can't stand, though she wakes up normally

How to check gums and temperature: page 3. After a specific surgery: pages 4 to 6.

Gums first. Press a fingertip on the gum until it goes pale, then let go and count. Pink again in under two seconds is normal, and the slower times start each list. If her gums are black, look inside the lower eyelid or at the tongue, and if there's no pink anywhere, go by the other signs. **Temperature.** Normal is roughly 100 to 102.5°F. From 102.6 to 103°F, or 99 to 99.9°F, take it again in an hour, and call your vet if it stays there or she seems off.

OK to watch

Normal early recovery

ANY SURGERY

- Mild bruising or pinkness right at the incision in the first few days
- A narrow, firm ridge about the width of a pencil right along the incision line, not growing
- Thin, clear to pink fluid in the first few days, tapering off, with no smell and no pus
- Mild redness or a rash on the shaved skin, if it isn't spreading or hot
- A soft cough or hoarse bark for a day or two after the breathing tube
- Grogginess and sleeping more for the first day or two, and a smaller appetite on day one
- Clingy, whiny or not herself for a couple of days
- One vomit the first night, if she's otherwise OK
- An accident in the house the first night, especially in an older dog
- A whiny, annoyed cry about the cone or suit the first night
- Slightly soft stool while on medications
- Mild sleepiness and a little wobble on a calming medicine
- A lick or two, if the incision still looks the same
- Not loving the cone or suit

After a specific surgery? Pages 4 to 6, surgery by surgery.

After a specific surgery

Surgery by surgery, every sign from all three lists, each tagged with its list. They add to pages 1 to 3.

SPAY

GO NOW

A tight or sore belly that comes with weakness, pale gums or vomiting

CALL YOUR VET TODAY

Vaginal discharge that keeps going past two days, or turns thick or smelly; a belly that's tender or a little tight while she's bright and eating, or hunching

OK TO WATCH

A little vaginal discharge in the first day or two, and a little tenderness right along the incision line for three to five days

LAP SPAY

GO NOW

A lump at a port that turns hard and painful and doesn't shrink when she lies down, or comes with vomiting

CALL YOUR VET TODAY

A soft bulge at a port, especially one that grows when she stands (send your vet a photo)

OK TO WATCH

A pea-sized firm spot under each port, and a little stiffness the first day from the gas

STOMACH OR INTESTINE SURGERY

GO NOW

Vomiting, a painful belly, a temperature over 103°F or sudden dullness, especially around days three to five

BLADDER SURGERY

GO NOW

No urine in twelve hours while she's awake, or vomiting, a painful belly or sudden dullness in the first week

OK TO WATCH

Frequent small pees and a little blood in the urine for the first several days, and small puddles even with some straining, as long as a stream comes each time

Continues on the next page.

After a specific surgery, continued

DENTAL

GO NOW

Bleeding from the mouth that won't slow, more than pink-tinged drool, or face swelling that grows fast, closes an eye or reaches the throat or tongue

**CALL YOUR
VET TODAY**

Swelling of the face or under an eye, a mouth smell that's getting worse, or pawing at the mouth that won't stop

**OK TO
WATCH**

Blood-tinged drool for twelve to twenty-four hours, not wanting to eat the first day, slower chewing for about a week, and bits of dissolving gum stitches coming loose

TPLO

GO NOW

Won't put the leg down at all after a slip, fall or jump, and it's swelling fast, looks crooked or hurts to touch

**CALL YOUR
VET TODAY**

Call the surgeon first: worse limping or not using the leg after she'd improved, new or growing knee swelling, ankle (hock) swelling that's hot, very painful or keeps growing, or drainage after the first few days, even months later

**OK TO
WATCH**

Touching the foot down only lightly in the first days home, and bruising or swelling that slides down to the ankle (hock) in the first week, if it isn't hot, very painful or still growing

NEUTER

**CALL YOUR
VET TODAY**

Scrotal swelling that turns hot and very hard

**OK TO
WATCH**

Scrotal swelling and purple bruising in the first few days, and an empty scrotum that takes weeks to months to shrink

Continues on the next page.

After a specific surgery, continued

MASS REMOVAL

**CALL YOUR
VET TODAY**

A bandage that slips, gets wet, smells or makes the toes swell, or foot swelling after leg surgery that isn't better in a week

**CALL YOUR
VET TODAY**

A drain that falls out or gets pulled, or drain fluid that turns thick or smelly

**OK TO
WATCH**

Some swelling around the site for three to five days, and drain fluid that stays thin and doesn't smell

Not sure which list? Call your vet, or the emergency clinic if your vet is closed, and describe what you see.