

Subtotal Colectomy for Megacolon

Your cat has undergone a procedure called a subtotal colectomy. This means that 90-95% of the large intestine has been removed, and the small intestine was connected to the rectum. The procedure is performed when procedures such as enemas and stool softeners fail to medically manage the condition called “megacolon” (a distended colon that does not empty properly). The goal of this surgery is to resolve your cat’s constipation.

EXPECTED STOOL CONSISTENCY

The colon’s main function is the reabsorption of water from feces before it is expelled from the body. Removing the colon results in stool that contains more water. Your cat will defecate more frequently and the stools will be soft. Initially, cats will defecate 30-50% more often. Within about 6 weeks of surgery, most cats’ small intestines develop the ability to absorb more water, and stools will become closer to normal. Many cats will continue to have somewhat soft stool for life.

HYGIENE

As your cat will be visiting the litter box more often initially, be sure to clean it more frequently. Keeping the box clean will help prevent defecation outside the box. Adding another box may help as well.

MEDICATIONS

As part of your pet’s care after surgery, you will be asked to give an antibiotic. It is important that your cat completes the course of medication to help prevent an infection.

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

- Your cat should not run, jump, or play for the 2 weeks following surgery.
- Confine your cat to one level of your home during this period
- Even if your cat normally goes outside, he or she should remain inside for 2 weeks.

INCISION CARE & MONITORING

Please monitor the incision area daily for the following signs:

- *Gapping or drainage*—please call if noted.
- *Irritation*- If scratching occurs; an *Elizabethan collar* (lampshade collar) may be needed until the incision has healed.

RECOVERY MONITORING & COMPLICATIONS

The most dangerous complication of this surgery is a serious infection called peritonitis. This occurs if the incision in the intestine leaks. The colon has a very high bacterial concentration that can cause an infection in the case of leakage. Fortunately, this is very rare. However, when it occurs, it is always life-threatening. Signs of peritonitis typically occur 3-5 days after surgery, and include:

- Abdominal tenderness, loss of appetite, vomiting, lethargy or hiding. Please call and return for a progress exam immediately (or go to an emergency hospital if overnight or weekends) if you notice these changes. The earlier we catch *peritonitis*, the easier it is to treat, as this is a *life-threatening complication*.
- Cats may not always eat well initially after surgery. Dehydration may occur if he or she is not taking in enough food and water. *Be sure to call if your pet is not eating within 24 hours after going home.*

PROGRESS EXAMS

- Please return for a progress appointment with your veterinarian in 10-14 days. They will assess your pet's healing and recovery, remove any skin sutures, and address any questions you may have at that time.

FEEDING

- Feeding is begun the morning after surgery.
- Tempt your cat to eat by making his or her normal food available. If your cat eats canned food, be sure it is fresh.
- If your cat does not eat within 24 hours, call your veterinarian for advice.

Most cats do very well after having this surgery. Although defecation habits are altered considerably following the procedure, over time this should improve considerably. Cats typically do not require further medical therapy for constipation. Most importantly, your cat will live a more comfortable lifestyle without the necessity of repeated enemas to facilitate defecation.