

Informed Consent

Adrenalectomy (Removal of an Adrenal Gland)

You have elected to have your pet undergo a surgical procedure called an adrenalectomy, where one of the adrenal glands is removed. The purpose is to remove a diseased or cancerous adrenal gland. The prognosis is generally good, but, depending on what is going on with the adrenal gland, there can be life-threatening complications. Below, there are general abdominal surgery complications and more specific risks with the specific adrenalectomy procedure. Complication rate after adrenalectomy is generally low, about 15%, but is higher with pheochromocytoma (see below) patients (up to 50%). If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

Abdominal Surgery Risks

Skin incision infection- this is a risk with any surgery, but is treatable with oral antibiotic therapy

Damage to abdominal structure that could cause bleeding, or contamination by contents of the intestines. The adrenal glands are fairly small and located next to major blood vessels, the liver, kidneys, pancreas, and gastrointestinal tract. During surgery, these tissues need to be watched out for or moved out of the way.

Adhesion formation (scar tissue formation in the abdomen)- scar tissue can impact the tissues in the abdomen in the future

Peritonitis- this is a rare but serious infection within the abdomen. If this occurs, additional therapies may likely be recommended.

Abdominal wall dehiscence (opening)- this can occur when the incision line used to close the abdominal wall fails. At first, the abdominal contents may stay covered by skin and subcutaneous tissue and revision is recommended. If they are not covered, emergency intervention is required.

Abdominal foreign body- very rarely, sponges or even instruments can be left in the abdominal cavity during surgery. We take precautions to ensure this doesn't happen, but it is possible.

Surgery to Remove a Functional Tumor
Hyperadrenocorticism (Cushing's Disease)

Post operative hypoadrenocorticism (low steroids, Addison's disease)- the excess hormone from the abnormal gland essentially causes the normal (remaining) gland to shut down and it can take time for the remaining gland to produce normal hormones again. During this time, your pet may get Addison's disease and treatment is usually required.

Pulmonary thromboembolism (blood clot formation)- dogs with Cushing's disease have a tendency to form clots, and when formed, they can get trapped in the small vessels. This can have an impact if the clot is large enough and affects something like the lungs. It could be life threatening.

Recurrence of Cushing's disease- if some tumor was missed, the tumor was spread, or if the problem to begin with was present in the brain (pituitary-dependent disease)

Surgery to Remove a Pheochromocytoma

Alterations in heart rate and blood pressure- pheochromocytomas produce adrenaline, but not in the normal physiologic processes that maintains homeostasis (consistent heart rate and blood pressure) in the body. When a pheochromocytoma is present, the effects of the randomly produced adrenaline causes abnormally high blood pressure (hypertension), abnormally low blood pressure (hypotension), abnormally high heart rate (tachycardia), and abnormally low heart rate (bradycardia). These changes can occur suddenly, can be life threatening, and have a tendency to be more severe during surgery.