

Informed Consent

Exploratory Laparotomy/ Abdominal Exploratory

You have elected to have your pet undergo a surgical procedure called an exploratory laparotomy, also known as abdominal exploratory, or more simply, exploratory. This is a procedure where the abdomen is opened surgically to identify and potentially treat a problem and/or collect tissue samples that could help in the diagnostic process.

Generally the prognosis with surgery is excellent, complications are rare (10% of cases, or less) but when complications occur, they can be serious, and even life-threatening. Below are a description of some of the most common things that could happen. If you have any questions or concerns, please let us know.

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

Peritonitis (inflammation) and septic peritonitis (infection of the abdomen)- is a potentially life-threatening problem and emergency explore/revision surgery may be indicated. The abdomen is supposed to be a clean and sterile place. If a chemical from the body leaks into the abdomen or there is microbial contamination of the abdomen, that may lead to peritonitis. Peritonitis can result from a variety of situations including but not limited to intra-operative contamination from the patient or environment or surgical team, or contamination from inside the abdomen from other sources including the liver, bile, urine, stomach, intestines, or if there is a site of infection (abscess) that is sampled during the exploratory surgery.

Leakage from a biopsy site- biopsy sites including the stomach, intestines, and urinary bladder require water-tight closure. If they leak, or open (dehiscence), that is a source of post-operative contamination that may lead to peritonitis (above).

Bleeding- if dissection in tissues violates large vessels, or if samples are obtained from the spleen or liver (very vascular organs), or if these tissues are removed (all or in part), there is risk of hemorrhage during and after surgery. This isn't usually life threatening, but it's possible.

Intussusception- this occurs usually when the intestines are otherwise diseased, afflicted by abnormality, or operated on. It is the situation where intestines end up inside one another and can be life threatening if not treated. Additional surgery is usually recommended.

Abdominal wall dehiscence- 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.

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

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 exist, but it is possible.