

POST-SURGICAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR EAR CROPS

Dr. Teresa Gernon
Magazine Street Animal Clinic
3458 Magazine Street, New Orleans
(504) 891-4115

Now that your puppy's ears have been cropped, there is still quite a bit of work to be done to reach the desired goal. The following has been prepared to help you understand what needs to be done over the next weeks/months.

POST-SURGICAL DISCOMFORT: most people are amazed how little discomfort puppies seem to be in after ear crops. This is because a combination of pain medications have been administered BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER surgery to keep pain from occurring even before it begins. It is important to continue the prescribed pain medications at home as directed to be sure your puppy never begins to experience pain. Even if you do not think your puppy is in pain, give all doses until finished. If you feel that your puppy is experiencing more pain than expected, please call us. Rarely, we may prescribe additional prescription pain control. NEVER give a double dose or over-the-counter pain medications unless you are directed by us.

SUTURES: there are usually two sets of sutures (stitches) that are removed at two separate recheck visits*. The sutures from mid-ear to tip are black silk sutures and will need to be removed 7 days after surgery. The second set of sutures at the base of the ears (white suture material) will need to be removed 10 days post-op. None of the stitches will dissolve on their own! **Warning:** delaying the removal of sutures beyond this time frame (exception is if the bottom suture removal falls on a Sunday when the clinic is not open, and removal is scheduled for Monday instead) will lead to suture reactivity and may cause excessive bumps at the suture holes and the potential of excessive scarring. DO NOT take sutures out at home. If you live out of town, we may be able to make arrangements with your local veterinarian for part or all of the suture removals.

* the only exception to this is miniature breeds and sometimes pit bull terriers. You will be told if only one suture removal appointment is needed.

INCISION CARE: apply *Neosporin Plus* ointment to ears _____ time(s) daily. This helps keep the incision/scabs soft and decreases the amount of itching and discomfort. It also prompts you to look at the incision at least once daily to be sure all is going well. There is no need to scrub or clean the incisions other than gently rubbing off any excessive scabs that are loose. Discourage excessive scratching/rubbing at incision area and/or bandage materials if applicable. See further information if ears are bandaged on top of head (usually applies to Dobermans, Boxers, and Great Danes).

POSTING EARS: Also called bracing or taping, this is the MOST crucial part of all, and will be the most frustrating part of having a puppy's ears cropped. The process of posting serves to hold the cut ears upright while the ear cartilage matures. We are, after all, taking an ear that would naturally be floppy and cutting it and "training" it to stand upright. Every veterinarian or breeder has his/her preferred method for posting ears. Regardless of method, the goal is to get the ears to stand upright as soon as possible, to be as comfortable for the pup as possible, and to be easy to monitor for moisture and odor.

The NUMBER ONE question asked is "How long will it take to get my puppy's ears to stand?" This is impossible to answer without making generalizations. The length of time it takes to get the ears to stand is very dependent on the thickness / rigidity of the ear and the genetics behind the dog. Some ears stand in a matter of days (usually only miniature breeds and pit bulls) or weeks, others take many months. It is also dependent on the length and width of crop and the age at which the crop was performed. Posting will begin at the time of the second suture removal when the incision is healed. **Posts will usually need to be changed once weekly, or as needed to keep the ears completely upright at all times. Never take the ears down without getting them posted again within a couple of hours.** Leaving ears down for more than a couple of hours can cause huge set-backs in the posting process.

If ears start to bend at the base of the post because the bottom came out of the base of the ear, immediately get the post back into the ear /repost the ear or bring the pup in for reposting if needed. Having the ears bend at the base can cause major long-term problems. If toward the end of the posting process, your pup is sent home without posts but then the ears start to bend again, it is imperative to bring the pup in as soon as possible to repost them.

Keep ears dry at all times! Do not attempt to bathe the pup with posts in ears unless the posts are to be changed the same day within a matter of hours. Avoid walking your puppy in heavy rain, though it is OK if they get sprinkled on lightly. Avoid letting him/her play in the dirt while sutures or posts are in ears.

BRING PUPPY INTO THE HOSPITAL IF:

- At any time the puppy gets ears saturated with water
- There is any foul smell coming from ears
- There is any discharge coming from ears

- There is any abnormal discomfort or itching

*** **PLEASE CALL AHEAD AND MAKE AN APPOINTMENT** if ears need to be rechecked. You may also drop your puppy off for several hours or for the day at no extra charge if you are unable to stay for an appointment time or if no regular appointment times are available. Four re-post visits are included with the price of the crop. This covers enough time for you to learn how to post them if desired. If you prefer for us to post them for you after this, a \$20.00 repost fee will be charged at each visit to cover the time and materials needed to repost ears.

Please don't get discouraged if ears don't stand within the "expected" amount of time. Many puppy's ears take several months to stand completely even under ideal circumstances.

Please remember there is never a guarantee that your puppy's ears will stand. However, we do everything possible to insure that they will. We want your puppy's ears to stand as much as you do!

Remember not to let the ear training process interfere with any aspect of your puppy's normal training and health care. Continue crate-training/housebreaking as usual. Also, don't forget regular vaccinations, heartworm prevention, flea control, etc. during this period of time. Sometimes we get so caught up in the ear training process that we almost forget the more important things.

THINGS TO REMEMBER:

DATE EARS WERE CROPPED: _____

EXPECTED DATE OF FIRST SUTURE REMOVAL: _____

EXPECTED DATE OF SECOND SUTURE REMOVAL: _____

MEDICATION SCHEDULE / Post-surgical instructions:

1. **Rimadyl (carprofen) pain reliever:** Give _____ tablet(s) by mouth morning and evening (every 12 hrs) until gone.
Administer NEXT DOSE: _____
2. **Antibiotics:** _____
Administer NEXT DOSE: _____
3. **Neosporin Plus** ointment: Place a small amount along incision line _____ time(s) daily starting tomorrow.
4. Allow your puppy to rest quietly tonight (he/she will still be slightly groggy/glassy-eyed from the inject able pain control). Feed and give water in SMALL amounts until tomorrow. Some pups go home and want to eat and drink too much at once. Expect frequent urination tonight and in the morning from I.V. fluid administration.

If your puppy is sent home with a Styrofoam cup* attached to his/her head, basic daily care includes:

1. Pull down outer stretchy layer to expose next bandage layer
2. Un-wrap white stretch gauze layer
3. Remove old gauze squares
4. Clean off excessive blood, scabs, discharge from incision *IF NEEDED*
5. Apply *Neosporin Plus* ointment along entire incision line
6. Apply new gauze squares, re-wrap or apply new stretch wrap over gauze squares
7. Pull outer stretchy layer back up over gauze and cup

*the cup will stay on head until the second set of sutures are removed, then ears will be posted individually.

IF AT ANY TIME YOU HAVE QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS, PLEASE CALL THE CLINIC.