



Description: A thoracotomy is a surgical incision through the chest wall, and the surgical approach can be between the ribs or on the midline splitting the sternum. The approach used depends on the exposure needed and the underlying disease.

Indications: A thoracotomy is indicated to treat respiratory conditions, including tumors requiring lung lobectomy, cardiac surgery, esophageal surgery, vascular ring anomaly surgery, or for the treatment of chest trauma.

Postoperative Care

Medication: Give pain medication only as prescribed and do not give human drugs without first consulting with a veterinarian. If vomiting is consistently observed following medication, contact our surgical staff.

Diet: Unless a special diet has been advised or other dietary changes have been recommended, it is generally best to get your pet back on his or her normal diet as soon as possible. Feedings should be smaller and more frequent than usual to allow time to recover from the surgery. Water should be available free choice. The appetite is likely to be decreased for a few days. Prolonged refusal to eat may indicate a problem.

Exercise: Limit exercise to short leash walks until the sutures are removed, and do not allow running, jumping, or playing with other pets for three weeks.

Signs of potential problems: Please observe your pets for any of the following problems:

- Severe lethargy, listlessness, or anorexia
- Trouble breathing
- Coughing
- Collapse
- Repeated vomiting
- Swelling or discharge from the incision

Recommended follow-up: Please schedule an appointment for suture removal 7 to 10 days after surgery. In addition, please contact us immediately if any of the above problems are noted or as instructed by our staff to treat your pet's underlying condition.

Prognosis: The prognosis following thoracotomy is highly variable depending on the underlying disease process. The prognosis, therefore, must be discussed on an individual basis.

Your pet's recovery and well-being are our primary concerns, so please do not hesitate to call and speak with a surgical technician or surgeon if there are any questions regarding your pet's recovery.