

## **WHAT IS AN ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY IN DOGS?**

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### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

An abdominal exploratory is a surgical procedure involving the opening of the abdominal cavity and examination of the abdominal organs.

#### **WHAT ARE THE INDICATIONS FOR PERFORMING AN ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY?**

An abdominal exploratory is indicated whenever there is significant abdominal disease that eludes diagnosis. Chronic vomiting, penetrating abdominal wounds, abdominal pain, abdominal fluid accumulation, urinary bladder disease, masses and intestinal disease are some of the more common indications for an abdominal exploratory.

#### **WHAT PREOPERATIVE EXAMINATIONS OR TESTS ARE NEEDED BEFORE AN ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY?**

Preoperative tests depend in part on the age and general health of the animal as well as the reason for the abdominal exploratory. Typically, radiographs, blood count, serum biochemical tests, a urinalysis, and possibly an EKG are performed.

#### **WHAT TYPE OF ANESTHESIA IS NEEDED FOR AN ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY?**

As in human patients, the procedure in dogs and cats requires general anesthesia to induce complete unconsciousness and relaxation. In the usual case, the pet will receive a pre-anesthetic sedative-analgesic drug to help him relax, a brief intravenous anesthetic to allow placement of a breathing tube in the windpipe, and subsequently inhalation (gas) anesthesia in oxygen during the actual surgery.

#### **How Is the Abdominal Exploratory Operation Done?**

Following anesthesia, the pet is placed on a surgical table, lying on his back. The hair is clipped over the middle of the abdomen, the skin is scrubbed with surgical soap to disinfect the area, and a sterile drape is placed over the surgical site. Your veterinarian uses a scalpel to incise the skin at the middle of the abdomen to open the abdominal cavity. The abdominal organs are examined and evaluated. If deemed necessary, other surgical procedures such as splenectomy, biopsy, cystotomy, ovariohysterectomy or enterotomy may be performed. These procedures are explained elsewhere on this site. The abdominal incision is then closed with one or two layers of self-dissolving sutures (stitches). The outer layer of skin is closed with sutures or surgical staples; these need to be removed in about 10 to 14 days.

#### **HOW LONG DOES THE ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY TAKE TO PERFORM?**

The procedure takes about 45 minutes to two hours to perform in most cases, including the needed time for preparation and anesthesia. The time will vary depending on any other surgical procedures that are performed. .

## **WHAT ARE THE RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS OF AN ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY OPERATION?**

The overall risk of this surgery is moderate to low, depending on the reason for the procedure. The major risks are those of general anesthesia, bleeding (hemorrhage), postoperative infection, intestinal or urinary bladder leakage and wound breakdown (dehiscence) over the incision. Overall complication rate is low, but serious complications can result in death or the need for additional surgery.

## **WHAT IS THE TYPICAL POSTOPERATIVE AFTERCARE FOR AN ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY?**

Postoperative medication is given to relieve pain, which is judged in most cases to be moderate and can be effectively eliminated with safe and effective pain medicines. The home care requires reduced activity until the stitches are removed in 10 to 14 days. You should inspect the suture line daily for signs of redness, discharge, swelling, or pain.

## **HOW LONG IS THE HOSPITAL STAY FOLLOWING AN ABDOMINAL EXPLORATORY?**

The hospital stay will vary depending on the reason for the exploratory and any additional surgeries that were performed. Hospital stays may vary from 2 to 5 days and release from the hospital will depend on the overall health of the pet.