



**Your pet has just undergone cataract surgery and is fortunate that you have been able to offer them their only chance for vision. The post-operative period can be overwhelming for you, but we are here to guide you through the post-operative process. This handout is intended to provide you with important information and pointers to aid in a successful outcome.**

## MEDICATIONS

Your pet has been prescribed various topical medications:

- an antibiotic to prevent infection
- a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory to treat inflammation (NSAID)
- a steroid to treat inflammation
- a lubricant to keep the corneas moist
- depending on the patient, some animals may also be prescribed dilating drops, anti-glaucoma medications or tear stimulants

It's important that all medications be given as prescribed with at least five minutes between each medication. We have attached a spreadsheet with this document. This spreadsheet may be helpful to keep track of medication specifics (i.e. type, frequency, etc.) and can be used as a guideline for treatment scheduling.

An E-collar is necessary for your pet to aid in healing and to prevent trauma. This collar should remain on at **all times**. If removed, it only takes an instant for your pet to rub the eye — resulting in breakdown of the corneal incision. Your pet will become quickly accustomed to the collar and will learn how to navigate, eat and drink with the collar on. The E-collar must be worn for the full, three-week post-operative period and potentially longer — depending on the healing process. This will be determined by your veterinarian or your veterinary ophthalmologist based on your pet's condition.

You may find it helpful to purchase a harness for your pet. This harness will prevent any unnecessary tension on your pet's neck and can be used to tie the E-collar in place as necessary.

You will want to restrict your pet's exercise for three weeks after surgery. Excessive barking, vigorous activity, head shaking and tension around the neck (from a collar

and leash) must be avoided. Exercise for your pet should consist of short leash walks only.

## COMPLICATIONS

Unfortunately, significant complications after cataract surgery can arise. Complications after surgery include: opening/breakdown of the surgical incision; decreased tear production; corneal ulcers; inflammation, infection or bleeding in the eye; retinal detachment; and glaucoma. Unfortunately, many of these complications threaten your pet's vision as well as the eye. In some cases, this means that eye removal may be necessary.

It can be stressful monitoring your pet at home for complications and knowing what is "normal healing" versus what is a problem. *Whenever you are in doubt about how your pet is doing, an immediate recheck is recommended.* Prompt treatment always has the best success. It is best that any recheck examinations be performed with a veterinary ophthalmologist. However, in emergent situations, you may need to visit your veterinarian.

### Watch for these important signs:

**Redness of the whites of the eye:** the whites of the eye (sclera) will be inflamed/red immediately after surgery but this should subside with time. It is important to watch for any changes in redness over time (i.e. if the eye suddenly appears more red compared to its previous condition, then an examination is warranted as soon as possible). Any of the aforementioned complications can present as a red eye.

**Cloudiness of the cornea:** the cornea is the clear surface structure of the eye. The cornea can become cloudy from an ulcer, from glaucoma or from inflammation. Cloudiness of the cornea is usually due to fluid in the cornea (corneal edema). Corneal edema often appears hazy and bluish in colour. If you notice that the



cornea appears cloudy, a recheck examination is warranted as soon as possible.

**Irregularity of the cornea:** corneal ulcers are wounds on the cornea and these ulcers can result in the cornea looking rough, irregular or change the clear nature of the cornea. Ulcers can also become infected and this can make the cornea look yellow or whitish in appearance. The cornea can ulcerate anywhere on its surface, but in the early stages after surgery, the incision site is the most vulnerable. If the cornea and especially the incision look different compared to immediately after surgery, a recheck is recommended as soon as possible.

**Squinting:** cataract surgery is not a painful procedure but complications of cataract surgery (i.e. glaucoma, corneal ulcers) are painful and may present as squinting or attempting to rub the eye. If you notice your pet squinting, a recheck examination is recommended as soon as possible.

**Blood in the eye:** occasionally, the inside of the eye can bleed after surgery. If you notice any changes in the inside of the eye, an immediate examination is recommended.

**Blindness:** in most cases, your pet will be visual immediately after surgery. If your pet suddenly displays signs of blindness (such as bumping into things or disorientation), then immediate attention is required as your pet could be suffering from severe inflammation, glaucoma or retinal detachment.

**The most common complication after surgery is glaucoma (high pressure in the eye). Glaucoma can happen at any time after surgery, but the risk is highest in the first three weeks following surgery. Without treatment, glaucoma can blind an eye within hours.**

Glaucoma often presents as a painful (i.e. squinting) eye that is red with corneal cloudiness. However, the frustrating thing is that not all cases of glaucoma present as such — some eyes may appear relatively normal.

**Therefore, please seek IMMEDIATE veterinary attention if your pet's eye is showing any of the described signs, if the eye does not appear normal or if your pet is not behaving normally.**

If glaucoma is present, waiting a day or more can unfortunately result in a blind painful eye that would need to be removed.

While complications after surgery due to the general anesthesia are uncommon, they do exist. Decreased appetite, lethargy, coughing, vomiting or diarrhea may occur after surgery, but if they occur, they should be transient (i.e. less than 24 hours).

*If your pet isn't behaving as they normally do or if any of the previous signs persist for longer than 24 hours after surgery, it is recommended that your veterinarian examine your pet as soon as possible.*

## RECHECK EXAMINATION SCHEDULE

Our regular recheck schedule is within 24 hours of returning home after surgery, then at one week, three weeks, six weeks, 12 weeks, six months and yearly after surgery.

Overall, it's recommended that these rechecks be performed by a veterinary ophthalmologist. Should you need to go to your regular veterinarian for any of these rechecks, we ask that your veterinarian perform the following tests at each recheck:

- bilateral Schirmer tear tests
- fluorescein stain
- intraocular pressure measurements

To aid in the best care and treatment regime of your pet, we ask that you or veterinarian contact us after each recheck examination to discuss the examination findings and any possible medication changes. Please contact us at 306-966-7126.