

Spaying in Dogs

Why should I have my dog spayed?

We recommend spaying all female pets. The benefits to your pet's health and to help reduce the pet overpopulation crisis make this decision easier. It should be remembered that owners of Guide Dogs for the Blind, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People and Dogs for the Disabled routinely have their dogs spayed and this does not affect their ability to perform their duties in any manner whatsoever.

What are the advantages of spaying in the female dog?

- Prevention of "heat" or estrus
- When in "heat", the female experiences an urge to escape in order to find a mate. This unwanted and dangerous behavior is eliminated.
- Elimination of the hormone fluctuations that cause false pregnancy following the "heat cycle"
- Prevention of uterine infection known as *pyometra*
- Prevention of breast cancer. Dogs spayed before their first "heat" have less than 0.5% chance of developing breast cancer.
- Elimination of the risk of uterine and ovarian cancer

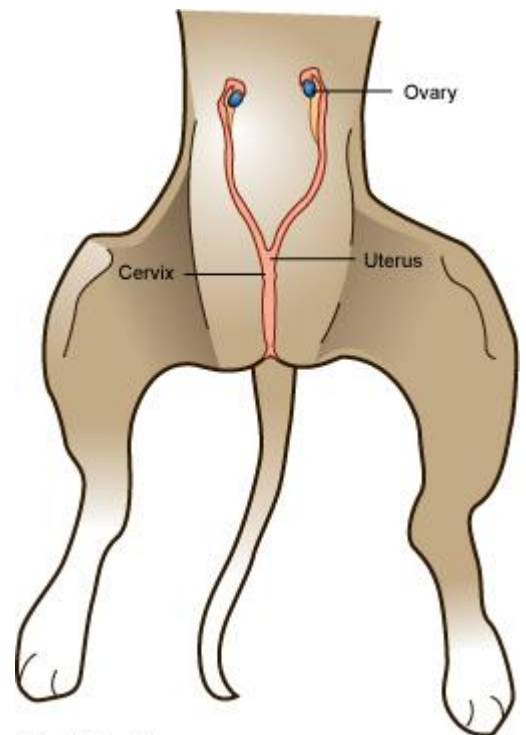
Is spaying performed for any other reason?

The operation may be performed for several medical conditions. These include:

- Treatment of intractable false or phantom pregnancy
- Treatment of irregular or abnormal cycles due to ovarian cysts
- Treatment of uterine infection (pyometra) or cancer
- Dystocia (difficult birthing) or post caesarean-section surgery
- An aid to correction of certain behavioral abnormalities

What are the disadvantages?

Most of the perceived disadvantages are false. The most quoted of these are that the dog will become fat, lazy, and useless as a guard dog. Obesity is probably the most commonly quoted disadvantage of spaying. Obesity is the result of overfeeding and lack of physical activity. The role of female hormones in preventing obesity is poorly understood. By regulating your dog's diet and caloric intake, you can prevent obesity in neutered or intact females.



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Spaying doesn't cause a change in personality, guarding instincts, intelligence, playfulness or affection.

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When should the operation be performed?

Most veterinarians recommend spaying between four and six months of age. Spaying at an earlier age, which is a common practice at animal shelters, does not appear to be detrimental.

Is there any alternative to surgery?

Not at the present time, although there are several promising advances being made in this area, including the development of novel vaccines.

Are there any dangers associated with the operation?

Spaying is considered a major operation and requires general anesthesia. With any anesthetic the risk of serious complications, including death, is always possible. With modern anesthetics and monitoring equipment, the risk of a complication is very low. It has been said that your pet has a greater chance of being injured in a car wreck than having an anesthetic or surgical complication.

What happens when I leave my dog for this procedure?

Your pet will be examined by a veterinarian and pre-anesthetic blood tests will usually be performed. If everything is acceptable, your pet will be anesthetized. Most pets will have an intravenous catheter placed to administer the anesthetic and to provide fluid therapy during the surgery. After your pet is anesthetized, a breathing tube will be placed in her trachea or windpipe. This will allow the delivery of oxygen and gas anesthetic directly into the lungs. The surgery consists of making an incision just below the umbilicus and removing both the ovaries and uterus. Many veterinarians use absorbable sutures so that you do not have to return to have them removed.



Are there any post-operative precautions I should take?

"Rest and restriction of activity are the primary post-operative care you should provide."

Rest and restriction of activity are the primary post-operative care you should provide. Most dogs can resume normal activity five to ten days after surgery. Until then, leash walks, lots of rest, and no running or climbing stairs are the rule.

I have heard that letting my dog have one litter will calm her down.

There is no scientific evidence that having puppies has any calming psychological effect. This myth has no basis in fact.

This client information sheet is based on material written by: Ernest Ward, DVM

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