

Small Animal ANESTHESIA (FAQs)

What happens when your pet undergoes anesthesia?

- 1. Prior to anesthesia, your pet will undergo a physical examination, and some special tests may be ordered.**
Pre-anesthetic tests help us assess the overall health of the patient and may include many of the same tests that a person may have prior to anesthesia, such as blood work, radiographs, and ECG.
- 2. After careful examination of the patient, the record, and the laboratory results, an anesthetic protocol is planned.**
- 3. Once the protocol is approved, the patient is brought to the anesthesia holding area for observation and pre-medication.** Patients are observed continuously while the pre-medication is taking affect.
- 4. Once adequately sedated, an intravenous catheter is aseptically placed into a leg vein** to allow administration of intravenous anesthetic drugs, analgesic drugs, intravenous fluids, and drugs that support the cardiovascular system while the patient is under anesthesia.
- 5. The patient is pre-oxygenated, and drugs to induce a state of general anesthesia and analgesia are administered intravenously.**
- 6. Once the patient is under anesthesia, a tube is placed in the trachea (windpipe) to allow the administration of oxygen and anesthetic agent to maintain a state of general anesthesia.**
Many of the drugs that are used on your pet during anesthesia are the same drugs that humans receive during anesthesia!
- 7. If special techniques for analgesia are required, these are usually performed at this time.**
Your pet may have more areas of shaved hair than you would expect if special analgesic techniques, such as epidural analgesia, are performed!
- 8. During anesthesia, the status of the animal is constantly monitored.** Careful observation and recording of body temperature, heart rate, heart rhythm, blood pressure, respiratory rate, and depth of breathing occurs from pre-medication until the end of recovery.
Monitoring and supportive care of patients undergoing anesthesia in the VTH is similar to the monitoring and supportive care that people receive in a human hospital!
- 9. During recovery, your pet will be monitored continuously** until he/she is completely conscious and body temperature, blood pressure, heart rate, and respiratory rate have returned to normal. Your pet is also monitored closely for signs of post-operative pain, and treated as required.
- 10. Your pet should be monitored closely for several days for normal return of appetite, water intake, urination, and defecation.**
It is normal for your pet to be moderately sedate if he or she is sent home the day of the anesthetic episode. If your pet is still look sedated the day after anesthesia, or is not eating, drinking, urinating, or defecating normally, you should call the VTH or your veterinarian!