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Pre-Anesthetic Procedures

The night before surgery can be (and usually is) a time of fretting for the owners of an animal that is facing a surgical anesthetic procedure. There are some things that you can do to make the procedures go more smoothly, and be less traumatic on your pets. Try to keep a fairly normal schedule the night before the surgery. Keeping a regular schedule will help to reduce the stress levels that your pet is experiencing. A little extra attention is always in order. Holding and petting your pet can help keep them, and you, calm. With procedures like anesthesia and surgery there are always risks involved. But the safety of modern anesthesia is much improved over the last decade. The following are things that can be done to minimize the risk.

Pre-anesthetic Blood Work

Most of the time, pre-anesthetic blood work is done the morning you bring your pet into the clinic. This blood work measures many different parameters in the body. There are several measurements of enzymes from the liver and kidney, along with measurements of blood glucose and electrolytes. Because much of the blood work is done the morning of surgery, we like to have you maintain a 12 hour fasting period before the animal is brought into the clinic.

Why is it necessary to do this blood work?

This blood work allows us to make changes in the pre-anesthetic and maintenance anesthetics. If the kidney enzymes are increased, indicating a problem with the kidneys, we can alter the drugs used to use those agents that are easier on the kidney. Likewise there are some agents that are easier on the liver or the heart, depending on what the problems are. This allows us to alter the agents used, and increase the safety of the anesthetic procedure.

Why the fasting period the night before?

This will help accomplish 2 things. First, the blood parameters are more accurate after a fasting period. After you feed an animal the absorbed nutrients stay in the bloodstream for a period of time. The fats in the blood, known as lipemia are usually cleared by 12 hours. Taking the blood too soon may result in lipemia adversely affecting the readings of the other enzymes. The only exception is very young animals. Many times they can get by with only an 8 hour fast. Their metabolism makes them more prone to hypoglycemia (reduced sugar in the blood) during an anesthetic procedure, and may be advantageous to allow only an 8 hour fast for the very young animal. Be sure to ask your veterinarian what period of fasting he/she would prefer in your particular case. The second reason is that an animal with an empty stomach is less prone to vomiting after the pre-anesthetic medications are administered.

How about water?

Water up until the time you bring your pet in for the procedure is OK, and encouraged. We like to have a well hydrated animal before the start of the procedure. We will be giving intravenous fluids as part of the procedure to help maintain hydration, but to start with adequate hydration is a big help.

Notification of change of history

If it has been a few days or weeks since your initial examination with the veterinarian, and something has changed in that time, please let the doctor know when you check in for the procedure. Things like your dog not eating, having diarrhea, vomiting, increased rate of breathing etc. can signal a change in the condition of your animal. It is important that your doctor knows of these changes.

Other Questions?

If you have additional questions before the procedure, please ask. Our objective is to give both you and your pet the maximum care possible. We want you to be comfortable with the procedure(s) we are doing.