

QUESTIONS TO ASK VET ABOUT MINIMIZING ANESTHETIC RISK

Here are some questions you can ask your veterinary team to learn about the protocols and safeguards they have in place to minimize anesthetic risk and maximize comfort for your pet during all the steps mentioned above. Some of the insights and reassurances you should be looking for are also included.

Q: Are there specific conditions or other aspects of my pet's health that increase their risk for anesthetic complications? And, if so, what precautions are you taking to minimize those risks and to deal with those complications should they occur?

- The veterinarian performing or overseeing the procedure should demonstrate that they have a good understanding of and have taken into account your pet's medical history and current condition. This is a crucial part of the "Assessment" step described above.

Q: What are the most common anesthetic complications that pets like mine experience while undergoing anesthesia for this type of procedure?

- Your pet's veterinary team should be aware of the complications your pet is most at risk of, and they should be able to describe specific steps they will take to recognize, prevent, and treat these potential anesthetic complications.

Q: Can you describe how my pet will be anesthetized?

- You want to know that pre-anesthetic medications will be chosen specifically for your pet, anesthesia will be induced with an IV medication and not a mask, an endotracheal tube will be placed to protect the airway, maintenance will occur with anesthetic gas, IV fluids and drugs are available to prevent and treat complications; and monitoring will occur on a regular basis throughout the procedure and (very importantly) during recovery.

**Q: Who will be monitoring and managing anesthesia for my pet?
What is their experience level and are they credentialed?**

- As an advocate for your pet, you want to ensure that anesthesia is being monitored by a knowledgeable person with training specific for anesthesia in veterinary patients. Ideally, a Certified Veterinary Technician (CVT) or Registered Veterinary Technician (RVT) will monitor your pet.

Q: Will my pet's anesthetist be dedicated to monitoring anesthesia, or will they also be performing other tasks such as the cleaning my pet's teeth or helping out in the treatment room?

- Ideally, you want one knowledgeable person who is dedicated to closely monitoring anesthesia for your pet and is not distracted by other tasks.

Q: How will my pet be monitored under anesthesia?

Because the most common complications include low blood pressure, decreased heart rate, shallow breathing, and decreased body temperature, the following monitors are important for your pet's safety (as long as they are used and interpreted by a knowledgeable anesthetist):

- Anesthetic depth monitored by looking at jaw tone, eye position, response to surgery
- Heart rate, respiratory rate and temperature
- Doppler or oscillometric blood pressure monitor
- Capnograph and pulse oximeter
- At a minimum, you want your pet's heart rate, respiratory rate, blood pressure, temperature and oxygen saturation to be monitored regularly throughout the dental procedure.

Q: Will my pet be monitored during recovery from anesthesia?

- The majority of anesthetic deaths occur during recovery from anesthesia. So you want to know that your pet will be observed and cared for during this critical time period (the first 1 – 3 hours after awakening from anesthesia). Monitoring of pulse and breathing as well as temperature are important. Temperature support and continued IV fluids may be helpful for some pets.

Q: (Specific to dental cleanings) Will you perform radiographs (x-rays) to detect potential damage and infection of my pet's teeth?

- While this may not seem directly related to anesthesia, early detection of damaged and infected teeth allows timely intervention and treatment which will help minimize the need for future anesthesia, and discomfort for your pet. Dental radiographs dramatically improve your veterinarian's ability to detect and treat dental disease. Such evaluation is important to ensuring your pet's overall dental health.

Q: What can I do to make my pet's upcoming anesthesia and procedure go smoothly and how can I help maximize their recovery?

- Your veterinarian may recommend changes in your pet's medications and feeding schedule before and after the procedure. They may recommend options for getting your pet used to traveling in the car. Appropriate pain and other medications may be prescribed. Following dental cleanings, home dental care, such as brushing their teeth and special dental diets or treats, may be recommended to help maintain your pet's dental health (and may reduce or eliminate the need for major cleaning and dental work in the future). Following other anesthetic procedures your veterinarian may be recommending limiting exercise or other activities for your pet.