

Anesthesia Safety Guide: Pre-Visit Care & Health Screening

We understand that bringing your pet in for surgery can be a stressful experience. To ensure the safest and most comfortable experience for your pet, we utilize a combination of Pre-Visit Pharmaceuticals (PVPs) to reduce stress, and Pre-Anesthetic Bloodwork to minimize medical risk.

Pre-Visit Pharmaceuticals (PVPs): Reducing Anxiety & Nausea

Think of these not just as "sedatives," but as a crucial bridge to a successful procedure. Surgery involves more than just the time spent in the operating room; it begins the moment your pet realizes they are headed to the clinic. PVPs help in three primary ways:

- Reduces "Fear Memory": Animals have long memories. By lowering anxiety before they arrive, we prevent the "white coat syndrome" from becoming a lifelong phobia.
- Smoother Anesthesia: A calm pet requires significantly less anesthetic induction gas and medication. This makes the entire process safer for their heart and lungs.
- Enhanced Pain Management: Many PVPs (like Gabapentin) prime the nervous system to handle pain better, leading to a more comfortable wake-up and faster recovery.
- Prevents Nausea (Cerenia): We include Cerenia to block the vomiting signal in the brain. This prevents nausea caused by the car ride or anesthetic drugs and protects against aspiration (inhaling vomit during sedation).

Without PVPs	With PVPs
High Cortisol; "Fight or Flight" mode	Relaxed; often sleepy or curious
Higher risk of injury to pet and staff	Easier handling for bloodwork and IVs
Requires a higher dose to overcome adrenaline	Lower, safer doses are effective
Potential for "dysphoric" (agitated) waking	A more gentle, quiet transition out of anesthesia
Risk of nausea or vomiting	Reduced nausea, increased safety during anesthesia & recovery

Fasting & Administration Instructions

To ensure anesthesia is safe, your pet's stomach must be empty to prevent aspiration (inhaling vomit). Please follow these steps carefully, unless directed otherwise:

1. The Fasting Rule

- No Food: Please remove all food and treats after 11:00pm the night before surgery.
- Water: Water is permitted right up until you leave for the clinic in the morning.

2. Giving the PVPs (How to navigate the fasting rule)

- The Night Before: Give the first dose as prescribed the evening before surgery. This helps "set the stage" for a restful night.
- The Morning Of: Administer the second dose 2 hours before your scheduled check-in time.

- The "Hidden" Trick: Even though your pet is fasting, you can use a very small amount (one teaspoon) of wet food, pill pocket, peanut butter, etc. to administer the medication unless otherwise instructed by our veterinarians.

Important Notes:

- Cerenia lasts 24 hours, which is why only one dose is needed.
- Sleepiness or Wobbliness can be caused by Gabapentin and Trazodone. If your pet acts "spacey," do not worry—this is normal and means the anti-anxiety medication is working!

Pre-Anesthetic Bloodwork: Identifying Hidden Risks

At Eagle Hill Animal Hospital, your pet's safety is our absolute priority. Animals are experts at masking illness, and just like a human can walk around feeling fine while having an underlying condition, your pet's physical exam only tells half the story.

Pre-Anesthetic bloodwork gives us the full picture. It allows us to see the internal health status that your pet cannot describe to us, ensuring they are truly ready for anesthesia.

Why is Bloodwork Necessary?

Even a pet who appears healthy on the outside may have hidden risk factors. Bloodwork acts as our final safety check before we begin.

- Identifies Hidden Risks: We detect early stages of kidney or liver changes *before* they become a problem.
- Customizes the Anesthetic Plan: One size does not fit all. If we find minor abnormalities, we don't necessarily cancel surgery; instead, we adjust the fluid rates and choose specific medications that are safer for your pet's unique internal chemistry.
- Sets a Healthy "Baseline": It provides a snapshot of your pet's healthy levels today, giving us a valuable comparison point if they ever get sick in the future.

What We Are Testing

Our standard pre-anesthetic panel focuses on the "Big Three" systems involved in a safe surgery:

- Liver Function: The liver is responsible for metabolizing most anesthetic drugs.
- Kidney Function: The kidneys filter waste and help maintain blood pressure during surgery.
- Blood Counts (CBC): We look at red blood cells (oxygen transport), white blood cells (infection), and platelets (clotting ability).

Understanding the Results

Test Type	What it Tells Us	Why it Matters for Surgery
Chemistry	Organ health (Liver, Kidneys)	Ensures the body can safely metabolize and clear the anesthetic drugs from the system.
Electrolytes	Salt and fluid balance	Prevents heart arrhythmias and dehydration
Hematology	Red/White cell and Platelet counts	Ensures proper oxygenation and surgical healing

Professional Monitoring & Patient Advocacy

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During any procedure involving anesthesia or sedation, your pet is never alone. We assign a Dedicated Patient Care Technician to act as your pet's personal advocate and monitor from the moment they are sedated until they are fully awake.

Our team includes Registered Veterinary Technologists (RVTs)—highly trained professionals who have completed rigorous national certification—who lead our monitoring protocols and ensure every staff member provides the highest level of care.

How Our Monitoring Team Keeps Your Pet Safe:

- **Constant Vitals Tracking:** We monitor heart rate, rhythm (ECG), blood pressure, and oxygen levels (SpO2) to ensure stability throughout the procedure.
- **Temperature Management:** Because anesthesia can lower body temperature, we use specialized warming equipment and constant thermal monitoring to ensure a comfortable wake-up.
- **Tailored Medication Levels:** Our monitors constantly assess your pet's "depth" of sleep, allowing us to use the lowest, safest levels of medication possible.
- **Supportive Fluid Therapy:** We manage intravenous (IV) fluids to support blood pressure and internal organ health while your pet is sedated.
- **Recovery Supervision:** A technician stays by your pet's side as they wake up, closely monitoring their vitals while providing a warm, quiet environment to ensure they remain calm and comfortable as they regain alertness.

Our Commitment to Safety

If the bloodwork results are within normal limits, we proceed with increased confidence. If we find something concerning, we will contact you immediately to discuss the best path forward—whether that means delaying the surgery, changing the anesthetic plan, or starting supportive treatments like IV fluids.

A Note on Anesthetic Risk

At Eagle Hill Animal Hospital, we utilize pre-anesthetic bloodwork to significantly increase the safety of every procedure by identifying hidden health concerns. However, it is important to understand that bloodwork cannot eliminate all risks. While our team follows the highest safety standards, anesthesia is a medical "induced sleep," and every individual patient—even those with perfect bloodwork—can react unpredictably. In rare and tragic instances, unexpected complications can occur that lead to the loss of a pet. By performing these tests, we are taking every proactive step possible to minimize those risks and provide the safest environment for your pet's care.