

## Neutering Your Cat

Neutering, or orchiectomy, is a surgical sterilization procedure that can provide major health benefits for cats. Here are some important facts you should know before getting your cat neutered.

### **The Neuter Surgery**

Orchiectomy is a surgery that is performed under general anesthesia. Your cat's scrotum will be shaved and cleansed, and an incision will be made. The veterinarian will remove both testicles and tie off the spermatic cords. The skin incision is closed with stitches or surgical adhesive. Following neuter surgery, your cat will no longer produce sperm and he will have lower testosterone levels.

Although neutering is very routine, it still carries the risks associated with general anesthesia and surgery. Your veterinarian takes numerous measures to keep your cat safe, such as checking his heart and lungs before administering anesthesia and monitoring him constantly while he is asleep. You can ask whether your veterinarian recommends any additional safety precautions, such as pre-anesthetic blood tests or administration of IV fluids during the procedure.

### **Benefits**

The normal behavior of an un-neutered cat is often incompatible with being a household pet. Intact cats tend to wander from home, seeking a mate or defending their territory. This puts them at risk for being hit by a car or being injured in a fight. Urine marking and some types of aggression are more pronounced in un-neutered cats as well. Although neutering may not entirely eliminate these behaviors, it can diminish them by 50-90%.

Intact male cats suffer from a high incidence of inflammation and enlargement of the prostate, as well as testicular tumors. Neutering your cat will greatly cut down on the incidence of reproductive related cancers.

The final benefit of neutering is that it's the best way you can help end pet overpopulation. Every year, 3-4 million cats and dogs are euthanized in U.S. animal shelters. None of us wants to contribute to that sad statistic, but we may do so unwittingly. Kittens adopted to apparently good homes may be given away or lost.

### **Considerations Before Surgery**

Consult with your veterinarian about when to schedule your cat's neuter surgery. Traditionally, pets are spayed at around six months of age. However, some veterinarians advocate performing the procedure earlier. The night before your cat's surgery, remove his food and water before you go to bed. He should not eat or drink anything during the night or the morning of his surgery.

### **Considerations After Surgery**

Your cat may go home the day of his surgery, or may stay in the hospital overnight. If he goes home the same day, expect him to feel a little groggy. Keep him indoors, in a warm, safe, quiet

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room away from other pets. During the first week after surgery, try to restrict his activity level. It may be necessary to keep your cat indoors for several days following the surgery and it will be very important to keep the litter box clean.

If you notice your cat licking the surgical site frequently, ask for an Elizabethan collar. Some cats develop a swollen or slightly bruised scrotal area following neuter surgery. Some swelling is normal, but don't be afraid to ask your veterinarian if you are concerned about your cat.

The effects of neutering on your cat will not be instantaneous. Testosterone levels wane over a period of weeks or months, followed by a reduction in fertility as well as territorial and mating behaviors.

