

## HOW TO KEEP YOUR DOG CALM AFTER SURGERY

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"No running, jumping, playing, swimming, or strenuous activity for 14 days." That's what our post surgical instructions said as I brought my dog home after her spay surgery. Have you ever tried to keep a 6 month old puppy from being active? It's like trying to keep your dog from staring at you while eating, much easier said than done.

After your dogs surgery you'll get a set of instructions as well; following them will help prevent complications during the healing period. Activity restrictions vary depending on the surgery so make sure to clarify with your vet what's acceptable for your dog if you have any questions. Many surgeries will require a few weeks of recovery time in which you need to limit your dogs physical activities. Not an easy task for most dogs, especially rambunctious puppies.

To keep your dog from playing, jumping, and running around after surgery they're going to need confinement or supervision. When you're not home you can use their crate, exercise pen, baby gates, or confine them to one room. If you are home consider using a leash inside to make sure they don't run off and get the zoomies or speed off every time the doorbell rings.

After the first few days many dogs start to feel better and start getting antsy; for many this is the toughest part of the healing process. It certainly was for me and my rambunctious pup. So what do you do to entertain your dog during this period? You get creative. Here's a few tips to help keep your dog calm after surgery.

### **STUFFED KONGS & OTHER FOOD TOYS**

In the past dogs had to forage for their meals rather than having it handed out a couple times a day. By stuffing a Kong or using a food dispensing toy you're giving them an opportunity to "work" for their food. These toys can help alleviate boredom and give your dog a chance to work on his problem solving skills. To make them last longer or for some added challenge freeze some peanut butter (check with your veterinarian) or broth inside of the toy.

### **NOSE GAMES**

Honing in your dogs natural sniffing abilities provides a great mental workout for dogs and they can lead to a lot of fun indoor nose work games. Dogs have excellent noses but it takes practice to get them to start using scent rather visual cues. To start with some basic nose work activities all you need is a few treats and one dog that loves treats. These 3 games are all great for beginners:

#### **Which Hand**

Place two closed fists in front of your dog, one of which has a treat inside. When he chooses the correct hand praise him and open up your hand to give him the treat. If your dog doesn't have a gentle cue do some hand target training first.

#### **Which Cup**

Place a treat under a cup and have your dog sniff out the correct one. Keep it simple at first and praise him when he chooses the correct one even if he's just choosing visually. Once your dog gets the hang of picking out the right cup shuffle them to get your dog to start relying on his nose.

## **Find the Treats**

Have your dog stay as you hide treats throughout the house. Make them easy to find at first as they get used to sniffing them out. When you release your dog tell him to "find the treats" and praise him as he discovers each one. As he gets better at the game choose some more challenging spots such as under a mat or inside of a box.

## **INTERACTIVE TOYS/PUZZLES**

Another simple way to keep your dog mentally stimulated is through interactive toys. Pet stores often have a big variety of doggie puzzles and interactive toys to choose from. You could also make a simple puzzle game with a muffin tin and some tennis balls. Put some treats in the muffin tin and cover them with the tennis balls and let him work out his problem solving skills.

## **GIVE YOUR DOG A VIEW**

During the recovery period dogs aren't generally supposed to go outside except for bathroom breaks. Being indoors all day does get pretty boring. Give your dog a little visual stimulation by allowing him a nice view. Whether it's soaking up the sun or watching what's going on in the yard a lot of dogs enjoy lounging in front of the window. Ask your veterinarian if you can sit out on the porch with your dog and enjoy the fresh air together.

## **WORK ON BASIC OBEDIENCE**

Does your dog know sit, down, stay, come, drop it, and leave it. These basic cues are ones every dog should know and being cooped up is a great time to learn. Even well trained dogs need to brush up on their skills from time to time.

## **TEACHING NEW TRICKS**

Teach your dog some new tricks to help keep their mind busy. Learning new behaviours is an excellent mental workout for dogs. Keep the training sessions short and focus on behaviours that don't require too much movement such as "high five" or "put your toys away."

## **THE NAME GAME**

Teaching your dog the names of objects is another brain workout for them and can be extremely useful. I like to start with something fun like teaching my dog the names of her toys. To start I'll grab one toy and while playing gently with it start using it's name so your dog assigns that value to it. Then you can place that toy with a few others on the floor and tell him to go get it.

## **DOGGIE MASSAGE**

A nice massage can be extremely relaxing and a lot of dogs love them just as much as we do. Not only do massages feel good they're known for lowering stress, improving circulation, and strengthening your bond.

## **CUDDLE UP & RELAX**

Sit with your dog on the couch (if they're allowed) or by their bed. During my dogs recovery period I spent a lot of time reading on the couch with my dog snuggled up next to me. It's an easy way to keep an eye on your dog and you get to spend some nice quality cuddle time together.

Keeping your dog calm after surgery is possible, it just takes some planning and a little bit of creativity. You can help make their recovery period easier by keeping them busy with a few low impact activities, fun games, and of course lots of cuddles.