

PATIENTS AT **INCREASED** ANESTHETIC OR SURGICAL **RISK**



Upcoming anesthesia and surgery is stressful for any pet parent; however certain medical, anatomical, and congenital conditions make a patient an **INCREASED RISK** anesthetic / surgical patient. Remember that anesthesia, in general, is very safe when the appropriate precautions are made and general overall risk of anesthetic complications are usually less than 1-3% of all anesthetic cases performed.

CONDITIONS WHICH MAY INCREASE RISK

BRACHYCEPHALIC BREEDS

Because of many years of bad breeding, [Brachycephalic](#) breeds [**DOGS:** Bulldogs (French*, English*), Boxers, Shih tzu's, Pugs, Pekingese, Boston Terriers, Affenpinscher, Brussels Griffon, Japanese Chin, Lhasa Apso, and others. **CATS:** Persian, Himalayan, Scottish Fold/Shorthair, Burmese] are much more prone to anesthetic and surgical complications because of their abnormal anatomy. Complications can include but are not limited to: esophagitis, are prone to multiple disease conditions including difficulty breathing (short nose, closed nostrils, elongated soft palate-extra tissue within the throat, small windpipe) which make them prone to increased complications under anesthesia. These complications can include increased risk of vomiting or regurgitation leading to esophagitis, esophageal stricture, aspiration pneumonia, prolonged anesthetic recovery, respiratory or cardiac arrest during the anesthetic procedure or in recovery.

Additional precautions taken with Brachycephalic breeds can include pre-op medication(s) to prevent chance of vomiting (Cerenia or Metoclopramide), and additional post-anesthetic recovery care including prolonged oxygen administration and additional monitoring (including breath alert monitors). ***Because of these precautionary measures, additional charges for brachycephalic patients apply.*** Also be aware, we are a high volume surgery facility (12-20+ procedures per surgeon per day) and there is not a dedicated staff member to personally monitor your pet during its entire recovery process.

Gold standard care is to have brachycephalic patients anesthesia & surgical procedures performed at a specialty facility. Please read [SURGERY, ANESTHESIA, AND BRACHYCEPHALIC BREEDS](#) for additional information.

UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION

Pets showing signs of respiratory infection (coughing, sneezing, nasal or ocular discharge, congestion). Proceeding with anesthesia and surgery is considered increased risk because both anesthesia and surgery can temporarily weaken the immune system. Pets with respiratory infections undergoing anesthesia are prone to complications including worsening of the respiratory infection, vomiting or regurgitation, and progression to pneumonia (infection of the lungs).

OLDER PETS, DECLINING PRE-OP LAB WORK, LAB WORK ABNORMALITIES, PREVIOUSLY DIAGNOSED MEDICAL CONDITIONS, AND CHRONIC MEDICATIONS

Older & geriatric pets, by nature, are always more delicate anesthetic patients as they may have an unknown underlying disease process. Likewise animals who have abnormalities with their [lab work](#) (ie: elevated kidney or liver values; low red blood cells; high white blood cells, electrolyte abnormalities, etc) or animals with KNOWN underlying conditions such as heart, lung, liver, kidney, allergic, autoimmune, metabolic problems, or animals who have been on chronic medications may all carry an elevated anesthetic and or surgical risk.

A note about **HEART MURMURS**...*It is impossible to determine whether a heart murmur is benign or pathologic by auscultation alone* (ie: listening to the heart with a stethoscope). An echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart) is needed to confirm the cause (origin) of the murmur and severity of heart disease (if any) present. Unfortunately the “loudness” or “**Grade**” (I-VI) of the heart murmur does not *necessarily* correlate with either heart disease presence or severity. For example, some cats can have significant heart disease present WITHOUT having a murmur. Please visit the [Heart Murmurs & Anesthesia](#) handout for additional information.

Pets who have underlying [un]known **seizure disorders** such as [epilepsy](#) can be prone to seizure relapse or increased seizure activity both during and after any sedative or anesthetic event. Seizures can also be a sign of other underlying metabolic or endocrine disorders.

*Risks and complications for **any anesthetic or surgical procedure** may include but are not limited to:*

worsening of pre-existing condition(s), exacerbation of unknown underlying disease processes, prolonged surgical procedure, secondary bleeding, bruising, anaphylactic reaction, secondary infection, risk of vomiting or excessive regurgitation under anesthesia leading to aspiration pneumonia, prolonged anesthetic recovery, esophagitis, esophageal stricture, respiratory or cardiac arrest, and in rare cases, death.

Resulting complications on **any patient with the conditions causing increased anesthetic or surgical risk** could lead to an ER or Urgent Care visit requiring additional treatments, medications, hospitalization. ****These additional treatments, medications, or hospitalization are not covered by the hospital and financial responsibility will be the expense of the owner.****

For additional information about **anesthesia in pets**, please visit the following website articles:

DOGS

[Anesthesia for Dogs](#) by VCA

[Anesthesia and Your Dog](#) by Pet Health Network

[How Safe is Anesthesia in My Senior Dog](#) by PetHealth Network

CATS

[Anesthesia for Cats \(VCA\):](#)

[Anesthesia and Your Cat:](#)

Please read [How Does Anesthesia Work](#) article written in [Veterinary Partner](#) powered by the Veterinary Information Network (VIN), [When Your Pet Needs Anesthesia \(AVMA\)](#), and [What Can I Expect When My Pet Needs Anesthesia](#) written by AAHA for additional information.