

DENTAL ANESTHESIA

Why Does My Pet Need to Be Under Anesthesia for Dental Care?

- Anesthesia keeps the pet immobile for examination and treatment.
- Anesthesia allows us to do what needs to be done in the shortest amount of time without discomfort for the patient.
- Dental cleaning procedures require intubation (placing an endotracheal tube into the trachea) to prevent bacteria-laden debris from entering the respiratory system. This can only be done under general anesthesia.

How is Anesthesia Delivered?

There are different ways to provide anesthesia, from intravenous or intramuscular sedation to general or inhaled routes. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages.

- Intravenous anesthesia results in a fast induction (time from administration to the time the cat/dog is asleep) but does not last long. Some intravenous anesthetics take longer to exit the body because they require metabolism by the liver and kidneys. In some cases sedation is sufficient to provide pain relief and motion control for short periods without having to use general anesthesia.
- Longer procedures (greater than 15 minutes) require general inhalant (gas anesthesia). Gas is breathed through a tube placed in the trachea and attached to an anesthetic machine, which mixes the vaporized anesthetic with oxygen. The degree of anesthesia (light, medium and heavy) is controlled by the percentage of gas mixture. General anesthesia is delivered through the lungs. Most times after the procedure is finished, the cat or dog breathes off the anesthetic and recovers quickly.

We consider many factors such as age, the procedure to be performed and preexisting conditions in order to choose the best anesthesia for the patient. Isoflurane is one of the newest and safest types of inhalant anesthetic used in small animal practices. In most cases a preanesthetic injection is given to sedate the patient, then the gas is administered with a mask over the mouth. Once the pet is heavily sedated, an endotracheal tube is placed in the windpipe.

Safety is our most important concern. Before aesthetic delivery, the animal is examined, with particular attention given to heart and lung sounds. Diagnostic preoperative stool, urine and blood testing of organ function are often performed to confirm the patient can safely be anesthetized. We must be made aware of any pre-existing medical conditions or medications your animal is taking.

Your pet is **always closely monitored** when they are under anesthesia. This means one of our trained veterinary technicians closely monitors your pet's blood pressure, blood oxygen saturation, electrocardiogram, respiratory rate and body temperature. Intravenous fluids are also administered throughout the procedure to help maintain your pet's blood pressure and provide intravenous access for additional drugs if needed. Additionally, warming blankets are always used to ensure your pet's body temperature stays within normal ranges.