

# Protecting sutures and wounds



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Whether it's a routine sterilisation procedure or a stitch-up after an accident, many pets will require some form of wound and suture management at least once in their lifetime. Even wounds without external sutures still need to be given time to heal.

It is a shame when healing is delayed due to a pet's 'intervention'. Licking, biting at sutures, chewing off bandages, rubbing tummies along the ground and too much bouncy play can all contribute to delayed wound healing.

There are many ways to help protect wounds and sutures:

### 1. Elizabethan collars

These are plastic lampshade-shaped collars, which slip over the animal's head and attach to their own collar. They are usually transparent and well tolerated, although there will be a period of adjustment as the animal becomes accustomed to their new width! Expect backwards walking and doorway crashing initially. Make sure your pet can access their food and water whilst wearing the collar. In an emergency, a bucket or a flower pot with the bottom cut out can make a temporary Elizabethan collar.



### 2. Pain relief

Pets often lick or worry at wounds because they are uncomfortable. We vet may prescribe pain relief for your pet post-operatively to help stop pain-related wound trauma.

### 3. Bitter chemicals

There are a number of safe but nasty tasting chemicals available, which can be smeared around wounds or on bandages to deter licking and chewing. Unfortunately, many determined pets will soldier on regardless of the unpleasant flavours, so they may only offer short-term protection.

### 4. Mechanical barriers

Socks, T-shirts and bandages can be used to cover and protect wounds. These need to be used carefully as they can potentially rub and irritate wounds.

### 5. Distraction

Take your pet's mind off its wounds by providing environmental distraction with bones, food-filled toys and chew sticks. Unfortunately, animals usually need to be rested after surgery and their sutures need to stay clean and dry, so long runs on the beach or bouncy plays with friends cannot be used to provide distraction.

### 6. Sedation

For the hard-core wound worrier there is always chemical restraint. Sedatives and anti-anxiety drugs can be used in the short term to calm the extremely exuberant or determined patient post-operatively, so they can rest and allow their wound to heal.

Always contact the clinic if you are concerned about your pet's wounds or sutures.