

Vet Questions

Let the vet know you are likely in shock and/or denial and not thinking clearly. Tell them you have questions you need to go through.

Do not feel embarrassed or a nuisance. The priority is getting the best care for your pet.

Assessment

- Do we have time to go through my questions or does my pet need to be treated urgently?
- What is your initial opinion on what could be wrong with my pet?
- How serious do you think it is?
- (If you are at an emergency vet) Do you have all the records from our regular vet and are you up to speed on all the symptoms?

Tell the vet ALL symptoms your pet has had recently AND in the last six months or so, as these could help diagnose what is wrong with them.

Tests

- What tests do you recommend for diagnosing what is wrong with my pet?
- What will these tests show?
- How might these tests change any management or treatment?
- What are the potential risks of these tests?
- What happens after the tests?
- How much will the tests cost?
- How quickly do I need to decide which tests to get?
- Do I have time to consult with my regular vet, or get a second opinion from another vet?

If diagnostics requiring general anesthetic are recommended (such as MRI), ask the vet:

- Is it possible the general anesthetic will make my pet's condition worse?
- What are the pros, cons, benefits, and risks, in particular reference to my pet, their age and condition?
- What are the alternatives for diagnosing that do not require general anesthetic?
- Does the outcome of this test make a significant difference to the treatment?
- Do you have access to a counsellor or similarly qualified person who can help me think more clearly to make the best decisions regarding diagnosing my pet, considering there are risks involved?

It is generally recommended that elderly pets do not have general anesthetic. If your pet is elderly, ask:

- What are the specific risks of general anesthetic for an elderly pet with the condition my pet may have?
- Why do you think the benefits will outweigh the risk in this case?

If your pet is elderly and/or may have a serious condition, be sure to ask as many questions as possible about them having a general aesthetic. It is risky and could make them worse.

Treatment

- Does my pet need treatment and what are the different treatment options?
- What are the risk and benefits of each treatment option?
- How likely is this treatment to be successful?
- How long will the treatment last?
- Are there any other options available?
- What happens if we do not treat them at all?
- Are there any possible complications from this treatment?
- What are the side effects of the treatment?

- What will this treatment cost?
- What do I need to know about the treatment (e.g. how to administer medications, care after surgery, time off work to care for pet)?
- How quickly do I need to decide about the treatment?
- Do I have time to consult with my regular vet, or get a second opinion from another vet?

If you are not at your regular vets, call your regular vet to tell them what has happened and talk through the diagnosing and treatment options. Your regular vet knows you and your pet better than someone new and can help you make decisions.

Prognosis

- What is the prognosis for my pet's condition?
- Where can I get more information and support?
- How will I know if it is time to consider euthanasia if my pet is suffering?

Critical Care

- How long will my pet need to be in critical care?
- Is it safe to take my pet to another vet for a second opinion or do they need to stay in critical care?
- Can I keep my pet with me in the waiting area or must they be in critical care?
- Can I go in and see my pet in the critical care area? What times and how long for?

If you do not need to make an urgent decision for your pet, do as much research as time allows before making any decisions. Ask the vets all your questions first, then go online and research your pet's possible condition(s), diagnosing options and treatment options.

Medication

- Will my pet need medication?
- What does the medication do?
- How often do they need to take it?
- How long do they need to take it for?
- What are the potential side effects?
- Could this medication interfere with other medications my pet is taking?
- What would happen if my pet does not take the medication, or we are delayed in giving it to them?
- Is there anything else I need to know about this medication?

Care at Home

- What do I need to buy to care for my pet at home? E.g. baby pen, pee pads, special food or feeding equipment?
- What will the home care look like?
- What should I expect in terms of progression or improvement of their condition?
- What do I need to watch for?
- How will I know if my pet's symptoms are getting worse?
- What should I do if symptoms get worse?
- What can I do if my pet is suffering, or cannot settle down?
- Will I be able to care for them on my own at home or will I need someone to help me?
- Will my pet need to be watched and monitored through the night?
- If I cannot cope with caring for my pet at home, can I bring them back to critical care?
- What number do I call if I have urgent questions?
- Will my pet need another appointment?
- Will they need to have more tests?

Questions for Reception

- What are visiting hours for critical care?
- What time will my next meeting with the specialist be?
- What is the number to call if I have an emergency or questions?
- How can I get a copy of my pet's records for my regular vet?

If you are not near your home while your pet is at the emergency hospital, you might need to stay in a hotel. Ask the receptionist for the number of the nearest hotel, and where you can buy essentials such as a toothbrush, phone charger etc.

Consulting with Your Regular Vet After Your Pet is Released for Home Care

- Do you have all the records from the vet hospital and are you up to speed on all the symptoms, treatment, and prognosis?
- What are your thoughts on the treatment and prognosis given by the vet at the vet hospital?
- What should I expect in terms of progression or improvement of their condition?
- What do I need to watch for?
- What can I do if my pet is suffering, or cannot settle down?
- Will I be able to care for them on my own at home or will I need someone to help me?
- If I cannot cope with caring for my pet at home, should I take them back to critical care?
- What number do I call if I have urgent questions?