

Urethrostomy, Scrotal

by Dr. Paul Newman (<http://mobilevetsurgeon.com>)

Bladder stones are a common problem in dogs. There are many different types of stones that form; some form from chronic infection and inflammation while others are caused from metabolic or genetic conditions. As long as the stones stay in the bladder, they can be treated with medicine to dissolve them or in some cases, they need to be removed surgically. In male dogs (although some female dogs develop this problem also) the stones will sometimes become lodged in the urethra (long tube connecting the bladder to the penis) and need to be removed surgically as well. Depending upon where they lodge and the type of stone they are, there are many different surgeries that may be recommended. In some cases, if your pet can not urinate at all, the surgery may be an emergency procedure.

Your doctor has determined that your pet is likely to keep forming stones that are likely to leave the bladder and cause recurrent problems. The best way to deal with this situation is to create a new, permanent opening behind the penis so the stones can be passed without additional surgery. Although no procedure is guaranteed to prevent future obstructions or bladder surgery, this procedure will minimize the chance that a stone will lodge itself behind the penis at the narrowest part of the urethra.

A perineal urethrostomy involves removing the skin over the scrotum of your pet (he will need to be neutered as part of the operation) and creating a permanent opening in the urethra right where it starts to bend up towards the bladder. We choose this location for several reasons:

1. It is the widest spot in the urethra and allows larger stones to pass without surgery or be flushed back into the bladder if they become lodged.
2. It allows the new stream of urine to be directed downward and away from the skin around the stomach preventing urine scald and irritation.
3. The urethra is closest to the skin at this point allowing for a faster surgery and less bleeding.

Facts You Should Know:

Every surgery has a certain amount of risk - especially if the animal is not perfectly healthy. Blockage of the bladder may have caused kidney damage. This may not be readily apparent but may result in kidney failure, which is sometimes fatal.

Each individual animal reacts individually to disease and treatment. We try to predict the outcome based upon the usual responses of the average dog. This makes it difficult to predict the exact cost and outcome of treatment. There are possible post-op complications following perineal urethrostomy including bleeding, failure of sutures to hold, and post-operative urinary blockage. Long-term complications include stricture or scarring of the new urinary opening necessitating further surgery. The initial blockage of the bladder may have caused bladder damage, which results in your pet being unable to control his urination.

Post-Operative Care

It is imperative that your pet not be allowed to lick or chew at the sutures around the incision until it is healed. Your pet must wear a protective cone or Elizabethan collar at all times to prevent this. It is not unusual for there to be some mild bleeding or scabbing around the new opening in the first 3-4 days. Do not pull this scab off and simply apply light pressure with an ice pack if you notice any bleeding. Have your veterinarian check your pet immediately if the bleeding does not stop or you are concerned. Some mild swelling is also normal.

It will take some time for all the swelling to reduce and a normal urine stream to be produced. On rare occasions, swelling or blood clots can obstruct the new opening so be sure your pet is urinating every day. Be sure to give all the antibiotic medication until it is gone as infections occur more commonly from surgeries around the rectum. Remember, this surgery is only done to prevent obstruction and will not prevent recurrent bladder infections. You can minimize the chances for these infections by following your veterinarian's recommendations on proper diets or use of distilled water to prevent or minimize the formation of crystals in your dog's bladder that cause these infections.

You may also put a little Vaseline, triple antibiotic ointment or Neosporin ointment on the exposed urethral tissue to keep it from drying out and help it heal properly.

Most of the sutures are not dissolving and will need to be removed in two weeks under a light anesthetic for the comfort and safety of your pet.

Do not hesitate to call your veterinarian if you have any questions about this surgery or anything that seems unusual about your pet's recovery.