

Laceration Repair

- A laceration is a cut or tear in the skin that may include damage to the muscles and other structures beneath the skin.
- While superficial (surface) wounds may sometimes be repaired using local anesthesia (which affects only the area of the wound), most laceration repairs require general (full) anesthesia of the pet.
- After the wound is cleaned and assessed, the cut edges are generally held together with suture material or skin staples.
- Lacerations should be repaired as soon as possible after injury to help ensure good healing.

What Is a Laceration Repair?

A laceration usually occurs as the result of a sharp object penetrating the skin and, possibly, the tissues beneath the skin. The resulting wound may be superficial, which involves a cut or tear in the skin only, or it may be deep, with damage to the tissues below the skin, such as muscles, tendons, blood vessels, or nerves. To repair a laceration, a veterinarian must clean and assess the wound before bringing the cut edges together with either suture material or skin staples.

When Should a Laceration Repair Occur?

If your pet has a laceration, see your veterinarian immediately. The longer the time between injury and repair, the more likely the tissues will become infected and healing will be delayed. Infections must be resolved before the laceration is repaired, to prevent bacteria from becoming trapped under the skin and forming an abscess (a localized area of pus and inflammation).

The skin may also contract and form scar tissue over time, which can make it more difficult to bring the tissue edges together. Prompt treatment will enable the veterinarian to determine if there is internal damage to bones and other structures that may not be visible on the surface.

How Is a Laceration Repair Done?

A laceration repair can be a minor surgery if the laceration is small or a major surgery if the laceration is large, deep, or infected. Superficial cuts can sometimes be repaired using local anesthetics, which affect only the area of the wound. However, thorough cleaning and exploration of lacerations usually require general (full) anesthesia of the pet. This allows immobilization of the area and minimizes stress and pain for the pet.

The veterinarian will clean the laceration and evaluate the extent of injury. In some cases, radiographs (x-rays) may be required to make sure there is no internal damage. The laceration is then repaired by bringing the ends of the severed tissue together with sutures (stitches) or skin staples. Deep wounds may require the placement of a temporary drain to prevent fluid buildup as the laceration heals.

Your pet may need to wear an Elizabethan collar to prevent licking or chewing of the surgical site until it is healed. Sometimes bandages or other

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protective coverings are used to protect the area after surgery. Pain medications or antibiotics may also be prescribed if needed.

What Are the Benefits of a Laceration Repair?

A laceration repair will help the severed tissues heal faster, with less likelihood of infection or excessive scar tissue. If tissues beneath the skin, such as muscles and tendons, have been damaged, the repair should help ensure that your pet regains full function of these tissues.