

## **Feline Spay**

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Spaying your cat is an important part of basic cat health care. Spaying at a young age prevents mammary cancer and spaying at any age prevents unwanted kittens, noisy heat cycles, and possibly even urine marking in the house. The following is a list of frequently asked questions gleaned from years of veterinary practice as well as from answering questions online. We have found that even though the cat spay is a routine and a commonly performed procedure, many pet owners still have questions.

### **What is actually removed during spaying?**

Spaying is an ovariectomy, which means that both the ovaries and the uterus are removed. The cervix is tied off, leaving the vagina to end in a blind sac.

### **Will spaying affect her personality?**

The female cat spends at least half the year with her reproductive tract dormant (cats only cycle seasonally, primarily in the spring and summer). This means that, behaviorally speaking, she acts spayed most of the time and no personality change should be noted. This said, it is important to realize that a cycling cat can be extremely solicitous of affection. This kind of playful, flirtatious behavior will stop with spaying.

### **How long after having kittens can she be spayed?**

The mammary (breast) development that comes with nursing can make the spay surgery more difficult. Ideally, a month after weaning allows for regression of this tissue and spaying can proceed. Unfortunately, it is possible for a female cat to become pregnant during this waiting period if her owner is not careful.

### **At what age can my cat be spayed?**

The traditional age for spaying is six months; however, this practice has enabled kittens to be adopted from the shelters unspayed. Often the new owner fails to return for spaying and the result is further contribution to the pet over-population problem. The last 20 years has brought us a great deal of research into "early" spaying and we now know that there is no problem with spaying as early as 8 weeks of age. Our hospital generally recommends spaying between 5 and 6 months of age.

### **Will she get fat and lazy after spaying?**

Estrogens have a natural appetite suppressing effect and the loss of estrogens may lead to an increased appetite. Further, sterilization surgery has been shown to slow a cat's metabolism. Depending on the cat's age and activity level at the time of surgery, a diet change to a "lite" diet may be in order. Ask your vet if you are not sure.

### **Can she still come into heat after spaying?**

Without ovaries, she should be unable to come into heat. Occasionally, a remnant of ovarian tissue is left behind by mistake. This can lead to some annoying behaviors as the female cat comes into heat (though she would be unable to get pregnant if her uterus has been removed as is customary with spaying). Special testing or even surgical exploration may be needed to determine if there is an ovarian remnant.