

Thoracotomy

A thoracotomy is a surgical incision through the chest wall made to access the lungs, heart, and other intra-thoracic structures. The surgical approach can be between the ribs or on the midline, splitting the sternum (breastbone). The approach used depends on the exposure needed and the underlying disease. A thoracotomy is indicated to treat respiratory conditions, including tumors requiring removal of part of the lung, cardiac surgery, esophageal surgery, or for the treatment of chest trauma. Thoracic surgery is best performed by a Board Certified Surgeon.

Your pet will most likely be hospitalized for several days after surgery and will usually have a chest (thoracostomy) tube to evacuate air or fluid post-operatively which will be removed prior to discharge.

Pain management is of utmost concern with these patients to allow them to breathe comfortably after surgery. As with any other surgery, there are some risks and complications associated with a thoracotomy. Some signs that should be monitored for after surgery would include but are not limited to: Trouble breathing, coughing, collapse, repeated vomiting, and swelling or discharge from the incision. If you notice any of these, please contact VSC. Your pet will be on exercise restriction for 2-3 weeks after surgery to allow the incision to heal properly.



Minnie had a thoracotomy to treat an esophageal problem (persistent right aortic arch)