Declawing information
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The Surgery
When a cat is declawed, the last segment of the digit is amputated from the toes on the front paws. After the declaw is performed, the declaw sites are closed with tissue glue.

Pain control
All animals who have surgery at Utopia Animal Hospital receive pain medication. Most of the time, before declaw surgeries, we place a pain patch on your cat’s hind foot. This patch allows for pain medication to be delivered to your cat continuously for a 3 day period. It takes about 12 hours to be at full strength, so we give your cat oral pain medication for the first day he or she is here. If you cat weighs less than about 5 pounds, he or she may be too small for a pain patch. In this case, we will begin oral pain medication the day of the surgery and continue it for several days post surgery. All cats will receive an injection of lidocaine to numb the paws before surgery.

Home care
It is important that cats are kept confined after surgery and that they do not lick or chew their toes until after they are healed. Cats who are running, jumping, and playing in the first 2 weeks after surgery are more likely to have complications from surgery. Cats who are licking and chewing at their toes may also open the declaw incisions.

It is difficult to keep a cat from jumping and playing. This means that they often need to be kept in a large crate or a very small room such as a bathroom until the sites are healed (10-14 days). If it is impossible to keep a cat confined at home, boarding a pet may be necessary. It is also difficult to keep a cat from licking or chewing his or her incisions. It is often necessary to place an e-collar (cone collar) to prevent licking and chewing. Sometimes, both measures are necessary to ensure a smooth recovery.

Cats need to use shredded newspaper or a cat litter such as Yesterday’s News (a newspaper based litter) for 10 days after being declawed. This litter comes in larger pieces that are much less likely to become lodged in a surgery site.

Recheck examinations
Your cat needs to be seen 4 days after his or her surgery to remove the pain patch, if present. Since there are no stitches present at the declaw sites, there is not another appointment needed for removal of stitches. If you have any questions or concerns, a recheck appointment can be scheduled as needed.

Complications
Since a declaw surgery is essentially an amputation surgery, there are several potential complications that can occur, even when the surgery went smoothly. Most often, complications develop when cats are licking at the incisions or when they are too active.
However, occasionally we see complications even when everything is done just as it should be.

Larger cats bear more weight on their paws than smaller cats (especially kittens). They can be more likely to have complications just because of their increased weight.

**Swelling of paws**
After being declawed, some cats may have swelling of their toes. In most cases, the swelling will resolve on its own in a few days, provided the cat is confined and not chewing at his or her incisions.

**Infection**
Despite our best efforts, some kitties may get a small amount of foreign material in a declaw incision, leading to an infection. Signs that there may be an infection of one of the toes are: swelling, pus discharge, or pain in that foot. If we think there is an infection, we will treat your cat with antibiotics.

**Opening of incision(s)**
When cats are too active or are chewing at their declaw incisions, they run the risk of opening one or more of the declaw incisions. This can lead to bleeding and infection of the site. If this occurs, we can usually glue the incision again without anesthesia. It is always possible, however, that we could need anesthesia to close the incision. Normally, we do not bandage the feet when this happens. Cats tend to shake their paws when bandages are placed, causing more bleeding.

**Pain windup**
There are nerves all over our (and cats’) bodies, including in the area where we do declaw surgeries. Doing any kind of surgery stimulates the nerves in the area. Occasionally, some nerves are stimulated during surgery and then still sense a stimulus for weeks or months after surgery. This is called wind up. Although we can’t ask our kitty patients, in people this can be perceived by tingling or mild discomfort. Cats may show us signs of this phenomenon by limping or holding a paw up. In this case, we recommend taking x-rays to make sure that there is not any kind of injury that we are missing. If the x-rays are normal, we recommend using a combination of anti-inflammatory medication and a nerve medication to stop the sensation. This involves giving medication daily for 3 weeks, but it is usually very effective at stopping the windup.

**Questions**
Please do not hesitate to call at any time if you have questions regarding your cat’s declaw surgery. Our phone number is 746-8758.