

Care of the Bitch After Whelping

General Information

Pregnancy and lactation (milk production) constitute a severe strain on the mother's health. Although most mothers handle the task admirably, the wise owner can take certain precautions to protect the health of both mother and puppies.

Important Points in Treatment

Physical examination: Within 48 hours after whelping, the mother and puppies should be examined by a veterinarian.

Diet: A special diet is not usually necessary, but the mother will require approximately twice as much food as normal.

Fluids: Provide clean, fresh water at all times.

Activity: Ordinarily, the mother will spend most of the first 3 weeks with her puppies. Allow her as much exercise as she desires.

Bowel movements: Because of the increased food consumption and the enlarged uterus, your pet may have to relieve herself more frequently. The stools may be soft for the first few days. If diarrhea or straining develops, call the doctor.

Mammary gland care: Check the nipples daily and clean with warm water if dried milk begins to accumulate. Inform the doctor of any discoloration of the skin, swelling, tenderness or sores. Trim the puppies' nails if they are scratching the mammary glands.

Vaginal discharge: A reddish vaginal discharge, with clotted blood, is normal for the first few days. This may occur intermittently for several weeks.

Behavior: Call the doctor if the nursing mother appears nervous, restless or uncomfortable, or if she refuses to nurse the puppies.

General effects: Normally the mother experiences heavy coat shedding during the nursing period. Brush her regularly, and call the doctor if any bald spots develop.

Estrus (heat period): Pregnancy should have no effect on the next heat period. This period should occur within 6 months after birth of the puppies.

Spaying (ovariohysterectomy): If you desire surgical sterilization for your pet, an appointment should be scheduled after the puppies are weaned and milk production has ceased, but *before* the next heat period.