Important Information Regarding Your Emergency Visit

Hello and welcome to the Emergency service at Lakeshore Veterinary Specialists. We are sorry that your pet is in need of care, but we are honored that you have chosen Lakeshore. We work very hard to provide the highest level of veterinary care and client service, and this requires that we keep you informed of what to expect during your visit. Below, we have outlined the emergency visit process and some of the challenges people face today with ER care. We have also summarized this information in a video if you prefer to listen to this information rather than read it. If you have any questions after reading this document or watching the video, please speak with one of our team members when they contact you throughout your visit.

For your safety and ours, we ask that you wear a mask at all times when face-to-face with our team.

Steps in Your Emergency Room Visit

1). Upon arrival at the clinic, please call the number listed on the clinic window immediately to alert us of your arrival. Be prepared to relay your parking spot number, the make, model and color of your car, and the reason for your visit. Please let us know immediately if you feel your pet is in crisis.

2) After informing us of your arrival, a technician will come to your vehicle to perform a triage in which they will get a brief description of the reason for your visit and will bring your pet into the clinic for collection of vital signs and examination. If your pet is deemed to be unstable, they will be immediately examined by one of our Lakeshore doctors. If they are stable, they will be placed in the queue and seen in the order of arrival.

3). The next step is collecting a full history. A technician will contact you by phone to request detailed information about your pet’s medical condition such as current and past medical conditions, current medications, allergies, vaccination status, previous surgeries and the possibility of toxin exposure. This information will then be relayed to the doctor that will be tending to your pet.

If you have access to your pet’s records from your family veterinarian, please provide them at the time of history. You may also want to call your veterinarian’s office, if they are open, to have records faxed to us.

People are often surprised by the length of time between triage and collection of history, which can often be 1 to 2 hours on busy days. Please know that we are doing all we can to keep wait
times as short as possible and that we are observing your pet closely during this time. We have not forgotten about you and your pet will never be alone.

If your pet is deemed stable and you would prefer to have them wait with you in the car, please let the triage technician know this at time of triage.

4). When it is your pet’s turn to be seen, the technician will relay the history to the doctor and the doctor will perform an examination. As required by law, we will perform an examination on every pet before any treatments or testing is performed.

5). After performing the exam, the doctor will call you to discuss exam findings and treatment options. They will present all treatment plan options and the costs associated with each. All diagnostic testing and care will be approved by you before they are performed. A deposit for the costs of approved treatments will be required at that time.

Please make sure you are available via phone and that all decision makers are on the phone. If you cannot be reached by phone, this may result in a delay in the initiation of testing and treatment.

On busy days it is not uncommon for wait times to be 2 to 3 hours between history and speaking with the doctor. During this time, our highly trained team will be monitoring your pet closely to ensure they are comfortable and doing well. If you prefer to wait at home, please let us know at the time of history. All communication can occur over the phone and you certainly do not need to be present for these discussions. If you choose to wait at home, you will be asked to provide a CPR code status indicating what life saving measures you would like us to take in the event of cardiac or respiratory arrest. We certainly hope that CPR will not be necessary but we must be prepared just in case. You will also be asked to leave a deposit to cover the cost of examination and basic care.

6). After a treatment plan is developed, your pet’s testing and treatments will be performed. The time required for this varies greatly based on the tests required but generally takes 1 to 3 hours. We will do our very best to keep you informed of how long we expect this care to take. Again, you are free to go home at this time or remain home until your pet’s treatments are completed.

7). After testing and initial treatments are completed, you will be called by the attending doctor to discuss the next steps. You will be notified of any additional testing or treatments needed and if your pet is ready to go home or will need overnight hospitalization.

8). If your pet does not require hospitalization, you will be transferred to the front desk or the front desk will contact you to be financially discharged.
9). After financial discharge, a technician will call you to go over the at **home care instructions**. You will receive a printed version of your instructions as well, and the technician will make sure all your questions are answered fully. You will then be assigned a time to pick up your pet.

10). When you arrive at the clinic at your assigned pick-up time, please call or text us to let us know you arrived. Again, include name, pet’s name, parking spot number, make, model, and color of vehicle.

**Why are Wait Times So Long**

We know how challenging and emotional it can be to have an ill pet, and long wait times in your car only make it worse. Please know we are truly doing all we can to control wait times; however there are a number of factors that have greatly increased ER wait times nationwide:

- There is a national shortage of both ER doctors and technicians. Increasing caseload, long hours, and overnight shifts have driven new veterinarians away from ER work.
- There has been a huge increase in the number of people choosing to come to the ER for care over the last few years, as well as an increase in what pet parents are willing to do for their pets. High-quality medicine takes more time.
- COVID has required new processes to be instituted to ensure the safety of our clients, their pets, and our team. Social distancing, carside triage, phone histories, and added cleaning procedures have all increased the time needed to care for each pet.
- COVID has also caused some family veterinarians to reduce their hours or temporarily close, pushing more cases to the ER.
- Family veterinarians are also experiencing record high patient visits and also struggling to hire veterinarians and veterinary staff. They often use ER facilities for case overflow, further driving the wait times at ER facilities.

**Thank you for your Patience**

We would like to thank you in advance for your patience. We know that these are very stressful times and we are working very hard to ensure your pet receives the highest possible care. We want you to know that even during the busiest times when we might not be available to provide frequent updates, it does not mean we have forgotten you or that care is slipping. On the contrary, we are directing all of our attention to your pet, which makes it challenging for us to handle frequent requests for updates. Please know that we will contact you as soon as we have information to share, and we will contact you immediately if your pet’s condition changes in any way. We all share in the goal of getting your pet back to health as quickly as possible, and working together, we can assure the best possible outcomes. Thank you for your patience and thank you again for choosing Lakeshore Veterinary Specialists!