

THE STORY OF

WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

My name is Marissa, I am a high school senior, and I am in my 12th and final year as a Girl Scout in troop # 2367 based in Arizona (but I just moved to Florida). I am working on my Gold Award, the highest award a Girl Scout can earn; it is the equivalent to the Eagle Scout for Boy Scouts. The topic of my Gold Award is cancer awareness in dogs, and I have named my Gold Award “Wags for Awareness- A Dog’s Cancer Journey.” Below is my personal story of my precious dog, Chica Harlow, why I decided to focus on cancer awareness in dogs, and the importance of getting information out to people to better understand cancer in dogs.

I have a three-year-old golden retriever, Chica Harlow, and she is my awesome service dog. Unfortunately, in September of 2021, we noticed a bump on her hind leg, which was diagnosed as Intramuscular Hemangiosarcoma, a form of cancer. We made the decision to amputate her leg and then started her on chemotherapy as well. Cancer has changed my future with Chica Harlow, and I have accepted my time with her has been drastically shortened.

Her cancer diagnosis was such a shock to my whole family, and to be honest with you; we were not prepared for the journey we are now on. One of the biggest realities we had to face on her cancer journey was the cost of everything, which was more than I initially had thought. We did not have pet health insurance for Chica Harlow before her diagnosis, which will never happen again with our future dogs. The horrible part of getting insurance for Chica Harlow is that once she was diagnosed with cancer, she now had a pre-existing condition. Insurance companies would not offer her insurance to cover the cost of everything she needed medically. With no insurance, we were faced with the option of putting her down simply because we could not afford all her treatments. I naturally did not want to put her down simply because I could not afford her treatments, especially since she saved my life as my service dog, and now I needed to do everything I could to save her life. Thankfully, my family had Care Credit. We had no idea Care Credit covered pets and humans; we were able to move forward with her treatments because of this.

My journey with Chica Harlow has inspired me to make a difference and to do my Girl Scout Gold Award on cancer awareness, focusing on our experience with cancer. My main goal for my Gold Award is to help bring awareness to the importance of pet insurance from day one. I also want to get the message out to be very aware of your pet’s health and stay on top of anything that is not normal. I want the information in my Gold Award to be informative and very kid-friendly because there is not a lot of information that is kid-friendly.

One part of my Gold Award, I will be creating new pet parent bags and cancer journey awareness bags. Both will help parents with information about their pet’s health from day one to the end of a cancer diagnosis. These bags will be at local vets, surgeons’ offices, and oncologist offices.

I believe support is a critical part of dealing with cancer. I would like to get an online support group started for kids and adults to turn to that will help them with their dog’s cancer journey. I want people to know they are not alone and that my support group will have professionals to help them, and there will be families who have or are going through cancer just like them. Most importantly, everyone is there for them when they need help, and they are part of a new family.

As I said earlier, I feel it is important for my project to be family-friendly, so I have created a patch program that Girl Scouts can earn or any family can use to learn more about cancer and pet health and earn a patch. The patch encourages you to dig deeper into that subject and do some research. I have divided my patch into two separate patch worksheets. The first one deals with the information in the new pet bags, more pet health-related, and the second patch worksheet deals more with the items in the cancer journey badge and dealing with cancer. I felt dividing them up helped keep this even more, younger kid-friendly so that they can learn about pet health without it being all about cancer.

As you can see, since I am dealing with cancer in my precious Chica Harlow, I have discovered that there is a need to help get more information out there. I hope my Gold Award will help other families dealing with a cancer diagnosis know they are not alone. It doesn’t have to be so scary, especially for younger kids. I know animals are important to all of us; keeping them safe and healthy is our passion.

WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

WHAT TO DO BEFORE A CANCER DIAGNOSIS STEP 1



The story of Wags for Awareness – A Dog’s Cancer Journey

In 2019 Stitch's (Marissa) 3-year-old golden retriever Chica Harlow, her service dog, was diagnosed with Hemangiosarcoma, a form of cancer of the blood vessels. Chica Harlow's cancer required her to have her back left leg amputated and to have chemo. This journey definitely has its bad days, but it also has its good days. However, along the way, Stitch realized there is a need for more information on cancer awareness in dogs, especially information geared towards younger kids and families dealing with their dog's cancer diagnosis. Stitch was inspired to make a difference by discovering the need for more information about cancer in dogs and Stitch's own cancer journey with Chica Harlow. This desire to get her message out to others encouraged her to do her Girl Scout Gold Award and Wags for Awareness – A Dog’s Cancer Journey was created. Stitch's Gold Award focuses on dogs' cancer and the journey her dog Chica Harlow is currently on in 2022. There are countless forms of cancer in dogs, and just like humans, each dog will have its own cancer story. No two stories are the same, but each cancer story will generally deal with some similarities. Starting from the beginning of your dog's life, it's essential to focus on your dog's health, and that begins with health insurance, vaccinations, cancer prescreening with your vet, monthly screening at home, finding out your dog's blood type, donating blood for other dogs (if possible), blood storage (if possible) and regular vet visits.

This worksheet is about Chica Harlow's experience and dealing with her form of cancer. This patch worksheet deals with general cancer information to help others begin to explore cancer in dogs and to better understand cancer in dogs in general through researching topics on their own. Since Chica Harlow had to have an amputation and chemo, which is her story, this patch will include research on those topics.

Stitch will also start her own support group because dealing with cancer is not easy on the dog's family, and it is important to know you have an outlet to turn to for support. Chica Harlow's vet and oncologist have offered to be members of this support group to help answer the medical side of things. The main objective of the support group is to help others and to know you are not alone, and ultimately build friendships/support with your new cancer family.

This patch worksheet is a money-earning project (in 2022) for Stitch from Troop 2367, who is working on her Gold Award, which is Wags for Awareness – A Dog's Cancer Journey. Her money-earning project will purchase supplies for Cancer Awareness bags she will put together for local vet offices, surgeons, and oncologists and buy items for the bags for the families to take with them on their journey.

WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

***** warning*****

This patch will go over several aspects of dealing with cancer in dogs. Please know that you will be researching cancer and learning more about how to deal with cancer in dogs to earn this patch. Please understand that this patch research might not be comfortable for all ages, and to please make sure anyone doing this patch is ready for the discussion and research of cancer.

However, I have tried to make this patch very kid friendly as I would like for kids of all ages to learn and understand more about cancer in dogs and not be scared of the word cancer.

Daisy and **Brownies** (k-3rd grade) complete at least 3 activities to earn this patch.

Junior (4th-5th grade) complete at least 4 activities to earn this patch.

Cadette (6th-8th grade) complete at least 5 activities to earn this patch.

Senior and **Ambassador** (9th grade and up) complete at least 5 activities to earn this patch.

Supplies you will need:

something to research information, paper, pencil

<u>steps for this patch</u>	<u>other patch steps if you would like to do another patch</u>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Pet insurance2. Immunizations3. Donate blood4. Prescreening for cancer5. Cancer in dogs	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Cost and decision to move forward with treatment2. Amputation3. Gear for dogs during cancer4. Chemo process5. Support6. Be prepared

****Please note****

This is a fun patch, and it is laid out like Girl Scout earned badges. This patch is broken down into six sections, and each section has five possible activities for you to work on. Above is the suggested number of activities each level should work on to earn this patch. It is a fun patch, so these are suggested numbers to earn this patch; you can do as many activities from as many sections as you would like to earn the patch. However, there is so much information in this patch for you to learn about, so please challenge yourself to do more and learn more.

Want to learn even more? At the bottom of each section, there is a section called additional research. In that section, there will be additional information you can research that deals with the topics in that section. This is optional; it is just a way for you to dig deeper into an issue that deals with cancer or a pet’s health and for you to learn even more.

Remember knowledge is power!!

WAGS FOR AWARENESS - A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY



Step 1: Pet insurance

Knowledge to help

Look into pet insurances available for dogs

1. List 3 reasons to have pet health insurance.
2. List 3 reasons not having pet health insurance could be bad.
3. What are some things to look for in pet health insurance options?
4. Can you get pet health insurance at any time? If not, why would your pet not be able to get pet insurance.
5. Why should the cost of pet health insurance be important? List several reasons it is important.



Additional research

Find out how many dogs do not have pet health insurance

Why should you get pet health insurance at least 2 weeks before you bring home your puppy if you can?

Why is it important to get your puppy's family health history in writing?

Why is it important to take your puppy to the vet to look them over as soon as possible once you bring them home?

WAGS FOR AWARENESS - A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY

Step 2: Immunizations and procedures for the first year of your dog's life



Knowledge to help

Look into the cost of your puppy's first year of vaccines

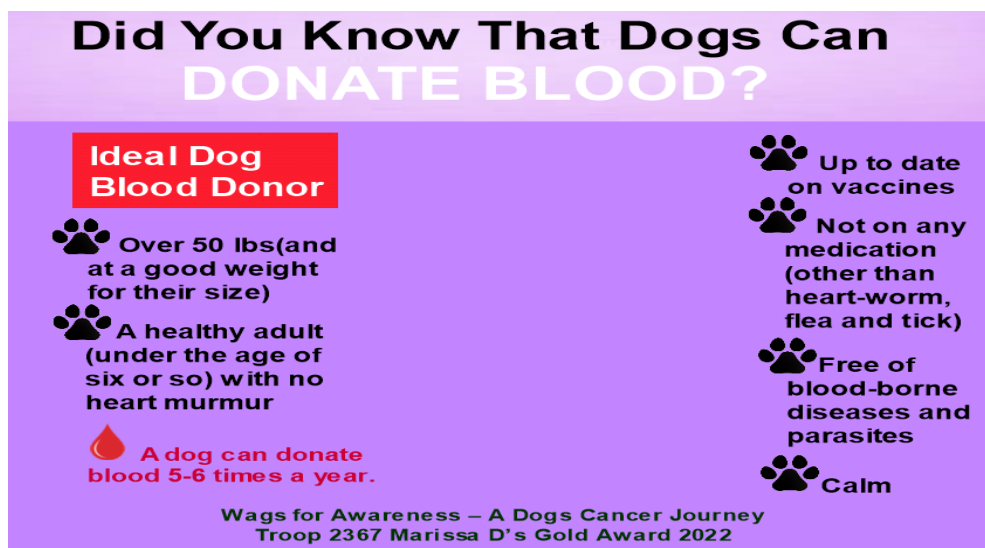
1. Find out if any vaccines/ shots are optional? If they are any, would you want your dog to get those vaccines?
2. Can a dog have an allergic reaction to vaccines? If so, what is the most common vaccine to have a reaction to, what are the warning signs and what do you do if your dog is having an allergic reaction?
3. Why is it important to have your dog vaccinated for rabies, list several reasons why?
4. Find out how they microchip a dog and list 2 reasons why it is important to have your dog microchipped.
5. Look into having your dog fixed if you are not planning to breed your dog. Research to find out the best age for your dog to have this procedure would be.

Additional research

Start good hygiene habits early, list 4 habits you should start once you get your puppy and make them a regular part of your puppy's routine.

WAGS FOR AWARENESS - A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY

Step 3: Donate blood



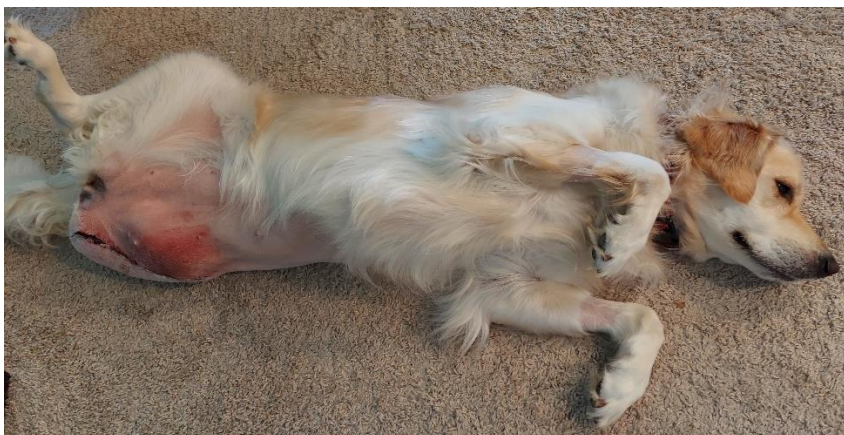
1. Can dogs donate blood at any time and why?
2. Give 3 reasons why is it important for dogs to donate blood for another dog to use if they can.
3. How often can they donate?
4. Where can a dog donate blood?
5. Can a dog have their blood stored for them to use in the future if needed and why is it important?
6. Find a local blood donation and storage near you. List 2 near you and how far away they are from you.

Additional research

Research why it is important to find out your dog's blood type as soon as possible.
Find out the cost to store your dog's blood

WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

Step 4: Prescreening for cancer in dogs



Knowledge to help

Learn the difference between a vet and an oncologist

1. List 2-3 reasons why it is important to get your dog’s family health history if possible.
2. List 2-3 reasons why is it important to have your dog prescreened for cancer with your vet.
3. Research tests vets can run to prescreen for cancer and list 3-4 of them.
4. Can you prescreen at home? If so, what would you do and how often would you do it?
5. List 5-7 early warning signs of cancer in dogs.

Additional research

Find out how many dogs are diagnosed with cancer every year.

Research what a lump that is cancer looks like.

WAGS FOR AWARENESS - A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY

Step 5: Cancer in dogs



Knowledge to help

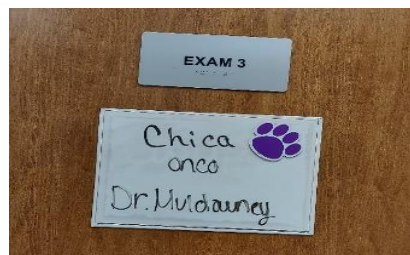
Research surgeons and oncologist in your area and see what they specialize in

1. Why is it important to examine your dog regularly?
2. Is it ok to get a second opinion if necessary?
3. What are the top 3 types of cancer in dogs?
4. What are 3 warning signs of cancers?
5. What is the usual treatment for cancers? List 2-3 options.

Additional research

Find out the average age of when dogs get cancer.

Find out what breeds are more likely to get cancer.



WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

Purchase patch worksheet

The cost of one patch worksheet is \$5.00, which includes the patch worksheet emailed to you, a custom patch I designed mailed to you (cost includes mailing envelope and shipping) If you would like to do the second patch worksheet please let me know and I will email you the second worksheet. If you are ordering more than one patch please let me know so I can send all the patches at one time.

Help make a difference in Wags for Awareness – A Dog’s cancer Journey

I started Wags for Awareness- A Dog’s Cancer Journey because in 2021 my service dog Chica Harlow was diagnosed with hemangiosarcoma (cancer) and we had to amputate her leg. Her cancer journey inspired me to do my Girl Scout Gold Award on cancer awareness. I want the information in my project to be kid /family friendly t help anyone at any age to have a better understanding of taking care of your dog’s health even if that includes cancer.

I realized there is a need to make information about the importance of dog’s health for new pet parents. I have created bags for vets to have and to hand out to new pet parents. In these bags I have the following information: an introduction letter, information about pet insurance, list of vaccinations a puppy needs, prescreening for cancer with your vet, a prescreening checklist to do at home, importance of blood donation, get informed about cancer, warning signs of cancer and prevention tips, and what types of cancer can affect certain breeds.

I have also created cancer journey bags which can be handed out at vet’s offices, surgeons offices, or oncologist offices. When a family is given a cancer diagnosis their lives will change, and they will experience so many new things. In these bags I will have the following information questions you need to ask your oncologist when you get a cancer diagnosis, what you need to do before your dog’s amputation surgery, surgery is over and now it is time to go home now what, and now that your dog has a cancer diagnosis make a celebration memory book.

I would like to ask you to help me keep Wags for Awareness – a Dog’s Cancer Journey growing. I want my information to reach as many families as possible to help families get the best medical treatments they can for their dog. If they are dealing with cancer I would like my information to help them on their journey. Can you talk to your dog’s vet, or surgeon or oncologist if you have one and see if they would be interested in any of the handouts I have created for them to hand out to their patients. If you would like to view my handouts just let me know and I can send them to you via an email. All my handouts are in PDF format so I can send them to anyone requesting them and this makes it easy to send to new doctors interested in helping me spread my message.

I have also started a Facebook cancer support group. If you know anyone currently dealing with cancer in their dog or if they have lost a dog to cancer I would love to have them as a member of my support group. If you feel a family could benefit from my support group please reach out to me and I will invite them to join. It is so important to know you are not alone during such difficult time.

If you would be interested in helping me please email me at marissa@scanposs.com so I can work with you to help Wags for Awareness – a Dog’s Cancer Journey grow. Please know that your help in getting my message out could truly save a life!

PICTURES OF CHICA HARLOW



First night home



Her 1st time in the rain



Look who is tired



Is this how you crate train?



Time to brush her teeth



Someone loves to sleep in the bookcase



Look at Chica Harlow being silly



First time wearing her shoes



After getting spayed



First time wearing her service vest



Completing a training class



She is so silly



Someone is ready to move to Florida



She loves her stuffed animals



We are moving to Florida



First day at Walt Disney World



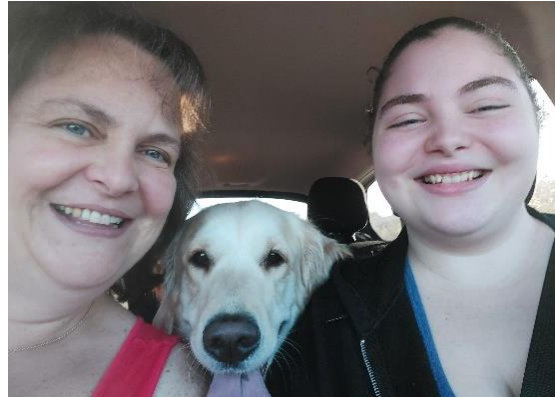
Few months before her amputation



My precious Chica Harlow



The riverboat at Magic Kingdom is her favorite ride



Someone loves to take pictures

Pictures of Troop 2367



I love having my mom as a leader



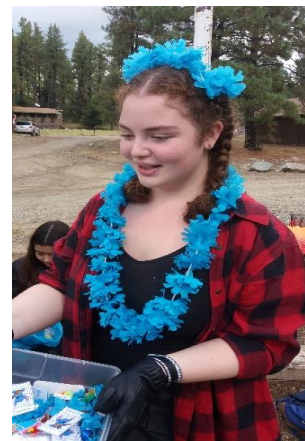
I am so lucky to have such amazing friends



Troop 2367 is the best



When I was a Daisy



I will miss Girl Scouts

WAGS FOR AWARENESS A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY

WHAT TO DO ONCE YOU RECEIVE A CANCER DIAGNOSIS STEP 2



The story of wags for awareness a dog's cancer journey

In 2019 Stitch's (Marissa) 3-year-old golden retriever Chica Harlow, her service dog, was diagnosed with Hemangiosarcoma, a form of cancer of the blood vessels. Chica Harlow's cancer required her to have her back left leg amputated and to have chemo. This journey has had its bad days, but it also has its good days. However, along the way, Stitch realized there is a need for more information on cancer awareness in dogs, especially information geared towards younger kids and families dealing with their dog's cancer diagnosis. Stitch was inspired to make a difference by discovering the need for more information about cancer in dogs and Stitch's own cancer journey with Chica Harlow. This desire to get her message out to others encouraged her to do her Girl Scout Gold Award and Wags for Awareness a Dog's Cancer Journey was created. Stitch's Gold Award focuses on dog's cancer and the journey her dog Chica Harlow is currently on in 2022. There are countless forms of cancer in dogs, and just like humans, each dog will have its own cancer story. No two stories are the same, but each cancer story will generally deal with some similarities. Starting from the beginning of your dog's life, it's essential to focus on your dog's health, and that begins with health insurance, vaccinations, cancer prescreening with your vet, monthly screening at home, finding out your dog's blood type, donating blood for other dogs (if possible), blood storage (if possible) and regular vet visits.

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Stitch will also start her own support group because dealing with cancer is not easy on the dog's family, and it is important to know you have an outlet to turn to for support. Chica Harlow's vet and oncologist have offered to be members of this support group to help answer the medical side of things. The main objective of the support group is to help others, to know you are not alone, and ultimately build friendships/support with your new cancer family.

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WAGS FOR AWARENESS A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY

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WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY



Step 1: Cost and decision to move forward with treatment

Knowledge to help

Look into how much it would cost every month to pay for a \$12,000 vet bill on a credit card

Look into the cost of chemo

1. How important is it to get a realistic answer from your doctor on how far the cancer has spread/progressed, how long does your dog have, and will they be able to make it through surgery and chemo?
2. Why would it be important to find out the cost of everything your dog will need medically to complete their cancer journey? This can include bloodwork, biopsy, CT scans, ultrasounds, iv chemo, daily chemo, pain meds, daily meds, transportation, hospital stays, extra vet visits due to weak immune system and new infections, follow up visits and lab work, chemo meds they might take after first round of chemo is finished, as it progresses new meds needed.
3. Make a list of items your dog will need medically to complete their journey.
4. If you don't have health insurance when your dog is diagnosed with cancer what are your options to move forward?
5. When trying to decide to move forward should family finances play any part of the decision? Why or why not?
6. Look into the commitment from the family other than financial like time taking them to appointments, the cost of the unexpected items needed, who will be with them almost around the clock the first 10-14 days after surgery depending on how much care they will need.

What we have encountered so far financially

****** PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING IS PERSONAL BUT IT IS THE REALITY OF CANCER. ALSO REMEMBER EVERY CANCER DIAGNOSIS AND COST IS DIFFERENT. I JUST WANT EVERYONE TO REALIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF HOW CANCER CAN TRULY IMPACT A FAMILY FINANCIALLY AND THAT IT'S A SAD PART OF THE DECISION TO MOVE FORWARD WITH TREATMENT OR NOT.******

1. For Chica Harlow as of March 2022 right now we have spent about \$12 thousand dollars in cancer bills from her first visit, to amputation, to just finishing up her first round of chemo. Our Care Credit for her cancer treatments is almost \$300 a month for at least 5 years. Care credit link https://www.carecredit.com/apply/?sitecode=sembetpqu1&gclid=Cj0KCQjw3v6SBhCsARIsACyrRALvfbvIzmF65FQoQdHjlrngVq7lKoChHNALXSTmmKb7-gf8VbRWB3oaAquWEALw_wcB&gclsrc=aw.ds
2. This bill does not include her over \$100 a month daily chemo meds she takes at home, which we have already done for 5 months, which is an additional \$500 and is not covered by Care Credit.
3. We will have approximately \$300-\$500 every 1-3 months in upcoming bills running test to keep her cancer mapping going.
4. With that if (when) things start to change there will be more tests and other meds possibly needed so that is an unknown amount of money needed.
5. She will eventually need a CT scan which is about \$2000 based on her first CT scan.
6. If she needs another round of chemo, it will be \$600-\$700 a month for 5 treatments (not including her daily meds).
7. During the time she is not on chemo at the oncologist, she will have to add another daily chemo med(s) at an unknown expense right now.
8. Pain meds and anti-nausea is about \$40 a month average.
9. \$50 a month for Turkey Tail pills (natural medicine to help boost the immune system and help slow some cancer growth)
10. Gas to travel to the appointments we have a 4-hour drive round trip so it's almost a tank of gas each appointment.
11. \$15 -\$20 a month for latex gloves, poop bags, anti-bacterial cleaner, wet wipes, and carpet cleaner because chemo meds make her pee, poop, and vomit highly toxic, so we need to be very cautious when handling clean up.

All cancer treatments are different, but this represents our general amputee cancer journey cost. So, in total, just for these expenses, we pay over \$500 a month, which once we add on her new daily meds after chemo and medical expenses after March 2022, this will obviously increase. This also does not include any emergency appointments she needs and required meds from those visits on average with her reoccurring infections; this adds another \$200 a month.

Unfortunately, the high expense is a huge reason why uninsured dogs must be put down as families can't afford this out of pocket or be able to get enough approved credit on a credit card or loan to charge such a large amount. Or to afford the monthly payments even if they do get approved. Usually, these payments are at a higher interest rate than pet health insurance.

Unfortunately, knowing our expenses per month, even if you have insurance for our pets, the monthly costs are more than most families can commit to without jeopardizing their own family budget.

Deciding to move forward with cancer treatments requires the family to think beyond keeping our friends with us as long as we can. How long do they have even with cancer treatments, can they handle the treatments, and can the family financially take on such a large debt?

Our dogs are a part of the family, and they deserve the best we can give them. Just know that every dog, every case, every family is different, and as long as you do the best your family can do in your situation, then know you are making the right decision. Don't let others influence your decision or make you question your decisions, but rather embrace your decision and believe in your decision. Ultimately your family is the one living this journey, and it is up to you to make the decisions along the way.

Your dog's cancer journey is not going to be easy as for most families it is all new to them. This is such an emotional time that starts the second you hear your dog has cancer. You have no idea how your life is going to change but trust me it just did. Decisions have to be made fast, you are trying to absorb everything, you will have a million questions that you don't know to even ask yet, you are wondering how long will you have with your dog, you question what do I do that is the best decision for my dog and my family, With having an amputation now she looks different, how is she feeling, how will she handle her new body, you wonder how do I know when she is in pain, the biggest question for me is did I do the right thing for her?? Biggest reality hit is my time with Chica Harlow is so much less and I didn't get to do everything I wanted to do with her. The question I will never get the answer to is **WHY???? Why Chica Harlow???** This is the most emotional time in my life I have ever experienced. Yes I have good and bad days which I know is normal but not a day goes by that I don't think of how cancer has changed my life. The emotional impact of a cancer diagnosis is not easy, and everyone will take it differently, but please if you find you are having a difficult time please get help. Remember your dog needs you to be healthy and to be there for them as they need you now more than ever.

WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY



Step 2: Amputation

Knowledge to help

Remember the question not asked could make a big difference.

Look into TRIPAWDS.COM and what they offer

1. If you don't know what amputation means do some research to find out what it means.
2. Find out what types of cancer might require a dog to have an amputation.
3. Do you know what a dog with 3 legs is called? If not, do some research to find out what they are called.
4. Is a dog's leg the only thing that a dog could have amputated because of cancer? If not list what other things dogs could have amputated.
5. Why is it important to take pictures daily (or more often if needed) and what would these pictures help document? Who would need to see these pictures?

*** If you would like to see pictures of Chica Harlow after surgery, email me at marissa@scanposs.com and I will send you a few pictures. I will not post them as they could be too hard for some girls to see. ***

Additional research

What should you expect the first 2 weeks home after surgery?



WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

Step 3: Gear for dogs during cancer



Knowledge to help

Look into Tripawds and their products

<https://gear.tripawds.com/>

1. List 3 reasons why is it important to have a safe and comfortable place for your dog at home especially on their cancer journey.
2. Besides a bed what are some other things your dog could use to help them function better daily especially during the recovery process if they had surgery or an amputation (this doesn’t have to be equipment).
3. Could a dog’s daily accessory need change after a cancer diagnosis? If yes, explain why.
4. Would a different cancer diagnosis require different gear? If so, give an example of why and list some examples.
5. Research 3 different dog gear companies and see what gear/accessories they have for dogs who have had an amputation.

Additional research

Research items that dogs could use in their daily life to help them (examples stairs and ramps)



WAGS FOR AWARENESS - A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY



Step 4: Chemo process

Knowledge to help

Research the difference between a vet (primary care), a surgeon (board certified surgeon), and an oncologist and what they specialize in.

1. Does chemo need to be done by an oncologist or can your vet do it?
2. Do dogs lose their fur during chemo why or why not?
3. Research chemo in dogs and find 1-2 side effects of chemo you did not know about.
4. Can chemo only be done by an IV or can they get pills instead?
5. Research what happens and the average cost for the first round of chemo treatments (usually 5 appointments) for a dog with Hemangiosarcoma (hee-MAN-jee-oh-sar-KOH-muh)
 - examples are blood work, x-ray, CT scan, chemo meds, over the counter meds, customized chemo if it is an option for your dog, biopsy, cultures, ultrasounds, pain meds, anti-nausea meds

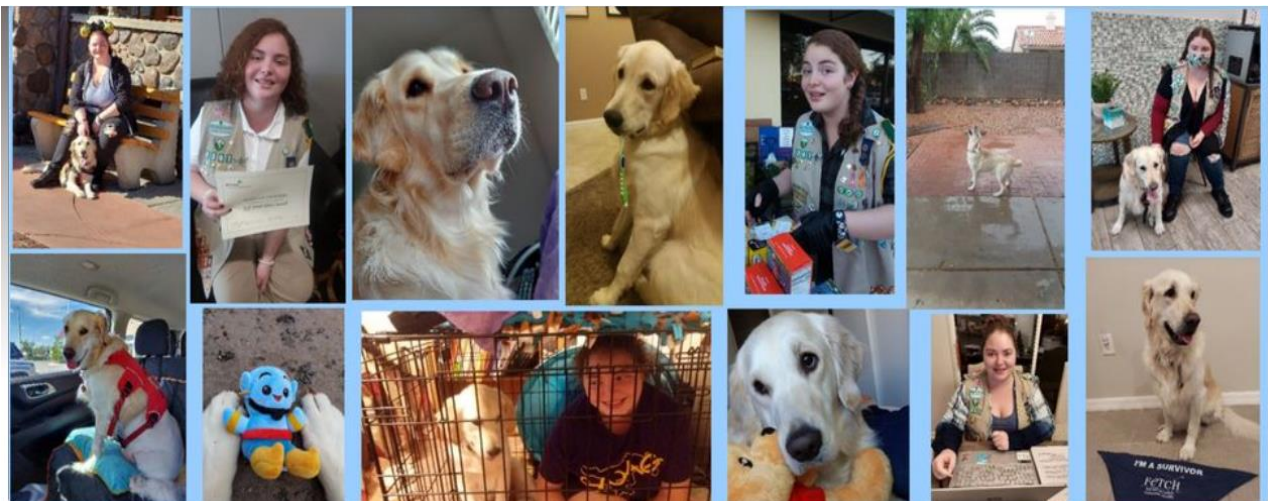


Additional research

Find out the differences and similarities between dog chemo and human chemo example: hair/fur loss, how chemo affects the veins, a pic line, sickness, amounts of chemo needed and how often between treatments

WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

Step 5: Support



Wags for Awareness - A Dog's Cancer Journey

Private group · 3 members

Join group

Knowledge to help

Look my Facebook group for dogs with cancer

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/wagsforawarenessadogscancerjourney/>

1. Give 3 reasons why support will help and is important during your dog’s cancer journey.
2. List places/people you could use for support for your dog for the medical side of the process.
3. List places/people you could use for support for you and your dog during this journey.
4. Make a list of 10 questions you think you might have if your dog was diagnosed with cancer. Why would these be considered support? The question not asked could make a big difference.
5. Give 3 reasons why you think it’s important to take pictures after surgery and why would this fall under support?

Additional research

Look up support groups for your specific dog’s cancer.

WAGS FOR AWARENESS - A DOG'S CANCER JOURNEY

Step 6: Be prepared



Knowledge to help

Love your dog and give them more hugs and kisses now!! Your dog doesn't know it has cancer, it just knows how it feels and is treated. Don't skimp out on the love just because your precious pet is sick

1. Celebrate small accomplishments and document them. List three accomplishments you would like to remember and why.
2. Set small goals for your dog to reach like making it to certain dates like a birthday or graduation and have mini celebrations when those goals are accomplished. Make a list you would like to celebrate with your dog.
3. Don't let cancer stop you from having fun with your dog and always continue to make memories and to laugh. Start a journal of all the funny things your dog does you might want to include pictures of all those crazy fun moments and/or write down an experience that made you laugh. List 3-5 reasons why do you think it is important to document these memories?
4. Cancer does not mean things have to be sad - yes, it is hard but don't let the sadness take over remember they can feel your emotions and they need you to be strong for them. List 3 ways you can be strong for them.
5. Nobody likes this step but unfortunately it is a part of this process. Plan for the final days and know in advance what your plans are so that you know before that hard day comes. Look into burying your dog versus cremation what do you feel you would pick and why?

Additional research

Research hospice care for dogs

WAGS FOR AWARENESS – A DOG’S CANCER JOURNEY

Purchase patch worksheet

The cost of one patch worksheet is \$5.00, which includes the patch worksheet emailed to you, a custom patch I designed mailed to you (cost includes mailing envelope and shipping) If you would like to do the second patch worksheet please let me know and I will email you the second worksheet. If you are ordering more than one patch please let me know so I can send all the patches at one time.

Help make a difference in Wags for Awareness – A Dog’s cancer Journey

I started Wags for Awareness- A Dog’s Cancer Journey because in 2021 my service dog Chica Harlow was diagnosed with hemangiosarcoma (cancer) and we had to amputate her leg. Her cancer journey inspired me to do my Girl Scout Gold Award on cancer awareness. I want the information in my project to be kid /family friendly t help anyone at any age to have a better understanding of taking care of your dog’s health even if that includes cancer.

I realized there is a need to make information about the importance of dog’s health for new pet parents. I have created bags for vets to have and to hand out to new pet parents. In these bags I have the following information: an introduction letter, information about pet insurance, list of vaccinations a puppy needs, prescreening for cancer with your vet, a prescreening checklist to do at home, importance of blood donation, get informed about cancer, warning signs of cancer and prevention tips, and what types of cancer can affect certain breeds.

I have also created cancer journey bags which can be handed out at vet’s offices, surgeons offices, or oncologist offices. When a family is given a cancer diagnosis their lives will change, and they will experience so many new things. In these bags I will have the following information questions you need to ask your oncologist when you get a cancer diagnosis, what you need to do before your dog’s amputation surgery, surgery is over and now it is time to go home now what, and now that your dog has a cancer diagnosis make a celebration memory book.

I would like to ask you to help me keep Wags for Awareness – a Dog’s Cancer Journey growing. I want my information to reach as many families as possible to help families get the best medical treatments they can for their dog. If they are dealing with cancer I would like my information to help them on their journey. Can you talk to your dog’s vet, or surgeon or oncologist if you have one and see if they would be interested in any of the handouts I have created for them to hand out to their patients. If you would like to view my handouts just let me know and I can send them to you via an email. All my handouts are in PDF format so I can send them to anyone requesting them and this makes it easy to send to new doctors interested in helping me spread my message.

I have also started a Facebook cancer support group. If you know anyone currently dealing with cancer in their dog or if they have lost a dog to cancer I would love to have them as a member of my support group. If you feel a family could benefit from my support group please reach out to me and I will invite them to join. It is so important to know you are not alone during such difficult time.

If you would be interested in helping me please email me at marissa@scanposs.com so I can work with you to help Wags for Awareness – a Dog’s Cancer Journey grow. Please know that your help in getting my message out could truly save a life!

PICTURES OF CHICA HARLOW



First night at home



Chica Harlow loves to sleep on her back



She is so tiny but growing fast



First time in the rain



Someone loves to ride in the car



First night home after biopsy



In pain but still doing her job as a service dog



It's amputation day and it begins



You can see her lump on her leg



We are off to the hospital for surgery



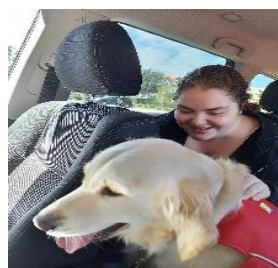
First day home after surgery



First time walking with no help



4 days after surgery



Waiting to go for a ride



My precious Chica Harlow



Chemo prep



Getting chemo



Finished her first 5 rounds of chemo



At my silver award ceremony



Working on my Gold Award



my initial Gold Award interview

Pictures of Troop 2367



We have so much fun together



These girls are so amazing!



My first year



Stitch (my camp name)



our final year helping lead leader daughter weekend

NOW THAT YOUR DOG HAS A CANCER DIAGNOSIS, MAKE A CELEBRATION MEMORY BOOK

Knowledge to help

Love your dog and give them more hugs and kisses now!!

Cancer can be a scary time, and the journey can be long, but it is a time to focus on the positive part of your journey. It's hard to talk about, but we all know that one thing is for sure: a cancer diagnosis does mean our time with our dog has now been drastically shortened. Now is the time to make every moment count and to make those last memories ones you will never forget. Remember your dog does not know that they have cancer, they only know how they feel and how you are treating them. When you are sad, they will be sad with you. We want our dogs to have as many happy days as possible so spend time mourning but also spend time enjoying the precious time you have. Stop, take some time now, and don't let cancer stop you from having fun with your dog. This is the time to make every moment count and remember to smile and yes, even laugh. Below are some ways to help create and remember those last amazing times with your precious dog.

Make a celebration memory book

On your cancer journey, you will have good and bad days; that is a given. However, try not to focus on the bad days; instead, find happiness and joy in the small accomplishments. Celebrate things like coming home, not having to be on pain meds every day, the first time they run around as they did before the diagnosis and completing chemo. Your dog is one of your kids, so this is the time to document every random silly little thing they do, so you always have those memories to look back on and smile and remember all the great times during cancer.

Also, remember to set small goals for your dog to reach. For example: making it to certain dates, like a birthday or graduation, then have mini celebrations when those goals are accomplished and add these memories to your memory book. Always remember to type up a small caption to help you remember that moment as you experienced it at that moment.

Cancer does not mean things have to be sad - yes, it is hard, but don't let the sadness take over. Don't let cancer stop you from having fun with your dog, and always continue to make memories and laugh. Remember, they can feel your emotions, and they need you to be strong for them. List 3 ways you can be strong for them.

I would love for you to share your fun memories on my support group. Please visit my Facebook support group www.facebook.com/groups/wagsforawarenessadogscancerjourney/ and post some fun pictures with an explanation of what you are celebrating.

GET INFORMED ABOUT CANCER IN DOGS



1. An estimate of 1 in 4 dogs will develop cancer at some point.
2. Almost 50% of dogs over age 10 will develop cancer.
3. An estimated 6,000,000 (6 million) dogs will be diagnosed with cancer this year. In many of these animals, the malignancy will look and behave much as it would in humans, such as spreading to the same organs.
4. Cancer accounts for nearly 50% of all disease-related pet deaths each year.
5. Dogs get cancer at roughly the same rate as humans.
6. Just like in humans, cancer can occur in virtually any part of your dog's body.
7. Approximately one in four dogs develops a tumor of some kind during their lifetime.
8. The cause of cancer in pets, just like people, is largely unknown.
9. Dogs are affected by more forms of cancer compared to other companion animals.
10. There are nearly 100 types of animal cancer.
11. Lymphoma covers over 30 canine cancer types and is the most common form of cancer diagnosed in dogs.
12. In general, mixed breed dogs and mutts are at a lower risk to develop cancer, because their traits come from a larger gene pool.
13. Nearly all treatment options available for humans are available for pets.
14. The first FDA drug to treat canine cancers was approved in 2009.
15. Second-hand smoke increases cancer risk in dogs and cats.
16. Obesity has been linked to the development of certain forms of cancer in animals.
17. Spaying your dog before their first heat cycle significantly reduces their chances of developing breast cancer.
18. Neutering can help eliminate the risk of testicular cancer in males.
19. Dog breeds with decreased cancer risk include Chihuahuas, Toy Poodles, Yorkshire Terriers and Dachshunds.

References <https://www.dogandcatrepair.com/sites/site-6583/documents/wellness/10-16ImportantPetCancerFacts.pdf>

<https://fetchacure.org/resource-library/facts/>

<https://barklypets.com/blog/6-important-facts-about-canine-cancer/>

<https://www.coastalpet.com/blog/10-facts-about-pet-cancer/>

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOUR ONCOLOGIST ONCE
YOU ARE GIVEN A CANCER DIAGNOSIS

1. What kind of cancer does my dog have?

2. Has the cancer spread, if so, where?

3. What is my dog's possible life expectancy without treatment verses with treatment?

4. If we decide to move forward with treatments is my dog strong/ healthy enough for treatments? Explain why?

5. Does my dog require surgery before cancer treatments? If so, what type?

6. If my dog needs surgery how much will that treatment cost, break it down surgery, test, biopsy, blood if needed, meds, hospital?

7. Will my dog need special equipment for their treatment, will I need any type of training on how to use the equipment? What is the cost?

8. Will my dog need blood for surgery in case of an emergency? If yes, what is my dog's blood type and does the surgeon have their blood type in stock?

9. What type of treatment plan will my dog need, once we start chemo explain meds my dog will need, how often, how long, other tests needed, other meds needed?

10. What are the side effects of each treatment and how will it affect my dog's quality of life? How do we handle allergic reactions?

11. How soon after treatment could this happen?

12. Are there any good support groups for me to look into?

www.facebook.com/groups/wagsforawarenessadogscancerjourney/

13. How much time do we have to let you know if we want to continue with treatments? What are the consequences of waiting? What is the max amount of time to wait?

14. Can my dog's treatments be done at home, or do we need to have the treatments done at the clinic? Will my dog need daily meds at home as well as the chemo done in clinic?

15. Is there a chemo that is custom made for my dog? If so how does that work? What company would I use? How much does it cost? Would I use that as the only treatment or with other cancer fighting drugs?

16. What is the goal for my dog's treatment?

17. How much will my dog's cancer treatments cost on average per visit, what does that include?

18. Do you offer payment plans, what companies do you work with for payments? (Pet insurance or care credit)

19. After chemo will I need to limit my dog's activity, if so, what and for how long after treatment?

20. How do I know if my dog is in pain and when will I know when to give them pain meds? How often can I give them pain meds without being concerned?

21. My dog has regular appointments at the groomers can they continue to go to the groomers? If so, how often, how soon after treatments, any safety precautions do I need to follow while they are there?

22. Will my dog lose its fur?

23. Will IV chemo damage their veins?

24. How do we know if the treatment is working?

25. What extra test will we need to have done during treatment/chemo and what is the cost for these tests? When will we need to do them?

26. How often will my dog receive treatment/chemo?

27.If I need to reschedule my dog's treatments, what is the max number of days I can push back their scheduled appointment and it still be safe?

28.Why is it important not to reschedule their chemo appointments? Is there a cost to reschedule?

29.Would there be any reason for you to cancel a chemo treatment (labs being off)?

30.How long does each treatment take? Can it be done in one day or do they have to stay longer?

31.Will my dog need daily meds at home along with their in-clinic treatments/chemo? If so, what meds will they need and the cost?

32.Why do I have to wear gloves when giving my dog cancer meds at home? What if it's a capsule and it breaks open am I at risk?

33.If I have any medical conditions (like cancer) or are pregnant, how do I handle giving my dog their cancer meds?

34. Will my dog need to be on any special diet during chemo? Are there any foods they can't have? Do they need to be on restricted amounts of food or liquid?

35. Is it ok to give my dog all their at home meds at one time or do I need to give them at separate times? If I need to separate the meds, why is it important for me not to give them together? Can it cause a reaction?

36. If my dog is having a reaction to their meds how soon will I know they are having a reaction? What should I do if I feel they are having a serious reaction? What do you usually do if my dog is having a reaction to meds?

37. If my dog has had reactions with meds in the past, what precautions should we take with meds at home and meds taken at the clinic, should we premed?

38. Will chemo meds cause my dog's urine, fecal matter, and vomit to become toxic? How long do we need to use caution when handling these items? How do we handle clean up especially with young kids and other dogs?

39. What precautions do we need to take if we have kids who play outside in the same area where our dogs goes to the bathroom?

40. How long will the chemo meds stay in my dog's body?

41. Will my dog be able to safely give me kisses while on chemo meds?

42. What meds will my dog need for things like pain, vomiting etc.

43. Once the first round of Chemo is done, what will the next step in their treatment be?

44. How will you map my dog's cancer journey? How do we document to see if the meds and treatments are working (test, scans, bloodwork etc.) if the cancer is progressing or spreading? Do we need to add or change any medications, do we continue, or should we think about stopping?

45. Will my dog be on daily meds for the rest of their life and what is the cost of those meds? What will happen if we only do the chemo and no other meds?

46. With my dog's immune system being attacked is it likely for them to get other infections or sick easier?

47. When do we know if our dog's time is coming to an end?

48. What are the signs that things are not working or that it is time to possibly stop?

49. Is there an option like palliative care to help in the last part of treatments and is it even an option for my dog? What exactly does this mean? If so, can this be done at home or in the clinic? What is the cost of this?

50. When should we consider humane euthanasia? Can this be done in the clinic or at home? How much will this cost?

51. What are my options once their life has ended burial versus cremation? How is that handled? Who handles that? What is the cost?

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO BEFORE YOUR DOG'S AMPUTATION SURGERY. (Can be used for most surgeries)

Did you know that all three-legged dogs belong to a unique community? Dogs with three legs are called Tripawds. Your dog might have three legs, but that will not change who they are. Sure, it might slow them down a bit, but having three legs will be harder on you at first than it will be for them.

Before surgery

Before your dog has their amputation surgery, make sure you know your dog's blood type, especially if your dog is at risk of needing donated blood during surgery. If your dog has a rare blood type, make sure the surgeon has their blood on the day of your surgery.

If there are any special meds they might need, make sure to have them at home when they come home from their surgery.

Ordering a harness for your dog would be a great tool to have when they get home. It will take time to build up their strength, muscles, and balance after their amputation. So it will allow you to help them gain their confidence and understanding they only have three legs now. Also, it will help protect them from falling and hurting themselves.

After surgery, your dog will need at least 10-14 days to rest and heal. They will need almost round-the-clock care those first few days. Because things could change quickly during this time, it would be ideal to make sure you always have someone with them and not to leave them alone. I spent 12 days on the floor with my dog, and my family switched off and did shifts, so someone was always awake with Chica Harlow.

Make sure your dog has a very comfortable bed that is big enough for them to stretch out as they will move around more, trying to find a comfortable spot. The best bed type for Tripawds is a low-profile bed with extra firm support and make sure it is machine washable. Also, you might want to put down a blanket, towel, or waterproof pad as they might get sick, have an accident, or mess/blood from the incision.

Have a puppy pamper day! Give your dog a good bath before surgery to ensure they are clean for their surgery. Also, get their toenails trimmed, so you don't have to worry about that for a few weeks after surgery.

Take plenty of pictures for your memory book.

Maybe make a fun pawprint picture or cast to have as a fun keepsake.

Pack a bag for you for the big surgery day. You might want to pack yourself a bag with things to keep you busy while your dog has surgery and possibly a snack and water.

If your dog will stay in the hospital overnight or for several days, pack a bag for them. You might want to include a blanket for them, but don't pack their favorite one as it might get ruined. Pack their food, especially if they are on a special diet or a picky eater, their collar and leash so they can go potty and start walking after surgery. If they are on any special meds, bring them with you or see how the surgeon wants to handle medication during the recovery process. Maybe a small toy just to have something familiar in their cage with them.

If you have wood or tile floors, put a path of carpet or rug between the door and the place where your dog will rest. You do not want your dog to slip and fall onto her incision.

Remember to take care of yourself during this time, as your dog needs you now more than ever.

******remember to find out when your dog needs to stop eating and drinking before surgery and what meds they will need the night before or the day of******

<https://tripawds.com/>

SURGERY IS OVER AND NOW IT IS TIME TO

GO HOME NOW WHAT?

Taking them home from the vet

Taking your tripod home is very emotional, and it can be scary. For most of us, this will be the first time we will have to deal with something like this, and it can be overwhelming as you have no idea what is ahead of you. The most important tool you will have in your dog's recovery is your surgeon's contact information. You will have questions, and you will be contacting them, and that is ok because they are there for you and your dog. Make sure to confirm how to get in contact with them 24 hours a day. Also, make sure you can send them pictures of the incision if you have questions on how it is healing and to make sure the incision is looking ok. Please don't feel like you can't contact them to ask questions. The stupid question is the question not asked.

If you have small kids or feel you personally might need a moment to prepare yourself to see your tripod for the first time, ask your surgeon to send you a picture. This will give you a moment to prepare yourself, but if you have young kids, this is the time to answer any questions they might have. This is also an excellent time to have a small cry which is perfectly normal.

Prepare yourself and know your dog will be shaved depending on the severity and location; it could be half of their body. They will have their lampshade cone to protect their incision. Remember, this is all new to your dog, so don't be surprised if they are not "walking" out to the car, especially bigger dogs. Give them time; it will happen, but their walk will be more of a hop.

Give them a moment to realize you are there to take them home as they are scared, confused, in pain, and on medication. Just give them a moment, hug and love them, and praise them; they deserve it.

Before you leave the vet:

1. Make sure you have their bag if you packed one.
2. Find out when the last time they ate, went potty, and how they are doing walking around.
3. Make sure you have the meds they will need at home.
4. Find out what they are taking and when they had meds last and are due for more.
5. Go over how to care for the incision site.
6. Find out when the stitches will need to come out, and make sure you schedule that appointment.

If you have different options for a car to bring them home in, try to use one that will be the most comfortable for them to get in and out of and to have room on the ride home. If you ordered a harness, bring it with you to help them get in and out of the car. Just be careful with their incision!! If you are not sure about the best way to get them in and out of the car, just ask the vet to help you, so you don't hurt your dog.

Make the car as comfortable as you can for them to come home. Pack a few towels and maybe a waterproof pad for them to lay on just in case of an accident. Also, maybe bring something just in case they get sick on the way home. If you can, bring someone with you to help you take care of them on the drive home.

If your home has stairs, you might want to think about putting their bed downstairs so they don't have to climb the stairs.

The first few days, your dog might not want to eat or drink much but remember it's essential to keep them hydrated and for them to try to eat. Be creative; if they are rejecting water, we added a bit of broth to Chica Harlow's water to get her to drink. We also made her eggs and put them in watered-down chicken broth; that way, she was getting food and liquid at the same time.

You might want to consider raising your dog's food, and water bowls up to make it easier for them to stand while they eat and drink. Or, if they are more comfortable lying down, consider lowering the bowls down to their level to encourage them to eat or drink.

Your dog might suffer from constipation or diarrhea after surgery. Please do not let this get out of control; don't hesitate to contact your surgeon and ask them what your dog needs to help them become more regular.

In the first few days, your dog will have a lot of new things to get used to. The biggest one, especially for dogs who have lost their hind leg, is how to stabilize themselves when they are going potty especially larger dogs. If you have a harness, use it to help them be more confident and stable so they can go potty and not have a fear and possibly refuse to go potty.

They might not want to get up and go outside, and it might take a few days for them to go potty, primarily because of all the meds they are on. It's essential to encourage them to go several times a day even if they don't go potty, but this is a great time to get them up and walking to build up their strength.

Bruising and swelling are normal, and it is part of the healing process. However, what is normal to the surgeon can be scary to you. As soon as you get home, take a close look at the incision and take pictures. These pictures will start their healing journey record, and they will also be part of your memories on your cancer journey. You will want to keep an eye on their incision and record (take pictures) any changes or any concerns you might have. If you are concerned with how the incision looks, contact the surgeon and send them pictures to evaluate. Our surgeon was great; we sent them pictures daily as we had no idea what "normal" was, and what they considered normal was not normal for me. That is why it is important to take pictures and have a surgeon that is there for you 24 hours a day.

Your dog will most likely come home with meds to take several times a day. You will be dealing with so many new adjustments, emotions, and exhaustion which is all part of the process but try to do things that will help you. If you need to give your dog meds, set an alarm as a reminder and start a meds record sheet. Some of the meds, especially pain meds or nausea meds, for example, you might not give on a scheduled time like you would for another daily med. The meds given list will help you keep track of the meds given; it will help you see if they need more or less of some meds. It will also help the vet see if the current meds are working or if they need to adjust their meds.

If you think your dog will scratch their incision area and don't want them to wear a cone, a great option is to have them wear a protective shirt.

If your dog is having a hard time with sliding on the floors, you might want to think about having them wear boots; or other nonslip aids such as ToeGrips or Paw Traction Pads, as it might help them with traction.

Have a daily dog spa session. Look at their incision and clean it and the area around it; if they have had any bleeding or discharge, **do not clean the incision site unless instructed by the surgeon**. Give them a massage as they will be using their muscles in a new way, and this is a great way to help relax those tired muscles. You might want to do this several times a day. Maybe brush their hair, especially if they have long hair, a few times a week.

Remember to praise them for every small accomplishment and give them lots of love!!!

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS AFTER AMPUTATION SURGERY

Please talk to your surgeon about these and other possible complications you need to be aware of when dealing with your dog's particular surgery and their health.

- **Bruising**
- **Seroma formation**
- **Infection**
- **Phantom pain**
- **Blood clots**

References: <https://virginiaveterinarycenters.com/what-to-expect-after-limb-amputation/> <https://tripawds.com/2011/03/08/post-amputation-side-effects-in-dogs/>

PET INSURANCE

One of the most important things you will ever purchase for your pet is pet insurance. Many insurance companies have a period of 2 weeks where they will not pay for any claims. Getting your insurance at least 2 weeks before you bring your puppy home will ensure you have coverage on your first vet appointment. Unfortunately, most pet owners do not know about pet insurance or opt not to purchase pet insurance because they don't see the need for pet insurance. Did you know the average cost of an unexpected visit to the veterinarian can cost anywhere from \$800 to \$1,500 and that is on the lower end and if they don't need further treatment. Below are some of the "normal" vaccinations/test/procedures your dog will need. Keep in mind you have the cost of vaccinations and the office visit which can add up very quickly even on a "healthy dog."

Vaccines and preventative care –

6 — 8 weeks DHPP, **Bordetella recommended but optional, Coronavirus if the vet recommends it**

10 — 12 weeks DHPP (vaccines for Distemper, Adenovirus [Hepatitis], Parainfluenza, and Parvovirus) **Influenza, Leptospirosis, Bordetella, Lyme disease per lifestyle as recommended by veterinarian optional, Coronavirus if the vet recommends it**

16 — 18 weeks DHPP, Rabies **Influenza, Lyme disease, Leptospirosis, Bordetella per lifestyle optional**

12 — 16 months DHPP, Rabies, **Leptospirosis, Bordetella, Lyme disease optional**

Every 1 — 2 years DHPP Influenza, **Coronavirus, Leptospirosis, Bordetella, Lyme disease per lifestyle optional**

Every 1 — 3 years Rabies (as required by law)

Other procedures

Internal parasite recommendations: fecal screening annually, puppies should get one on the first vet visit
Heartworm tests and monthly meds

Heartworm test are started at around 6 months of age then testing is done every 6months to 2 years after that.

Heartworm preventatives are given to the dogs at the 6-8 weeks visit and are mostly continued monthly for the rest of their lives.

Flea and tick prevention monthly meds

All puppies need prophylactic deworming at first visit

Spay/neuter usually around 6 months, spays should be done before her first heat cycle to help minimize the risk of breast (mammary) cancer in certain breeds.

Allergy testing, if needed

There are some insurances that do not cover certain breeds, please make sure that your dog will be covered. Below is a list of some dogs that will not be covered by all insurances

Pit bulls German shepherds Akitas Staffordshire terriers Chow chows Alaskan malamutes

Terms you should know about

Deductibles	Annual limits	Copays	Pre-existing
Waiting Period	Premium	Reimbursement	Hereditary conditions
Congenital conditions	Plan restrictions		

Wags for Awareness – A Dog's Cancer Journey Troop 2367 Marissa D's Gold Award Project 2022

GSACPC

Look into insurance companies and see if they cover any of the following:

Veterinary exam fees	Prescription Medications	Immunizations	X-rays
MRIs	Ultrasounds	Microchipping	Emergency
Injuries & illnesses	Hospitalization	Specialist vets	Surgery
Specialized Care	Rehabilitation	Virtual vet visits	Torn ligaments
Bite wounds	Broken bones	Car accidents	Poisoning
Cuts and lacerations	Eye, Ear, Skin Conditions	Digestive Illnesses	Growths
Parasites	Infectious Diseases	Dental diseases	Cancer
Hereditary Conditions	Breed-specific conditions	Hip Dysplasia	Toxins
Congenital Conditions	Chronic Conditions	Orthopedic Injuries	
Swallowed Objects	Advanced Care (e.g. Stem Cell Therapy)		Chiropractic
Behavioral Therapy	Holistic Care	Prescription Food	Getting Fixed
Supplements	Alternative Therapies (e.g. Acupuncture)		Declawing
Fecal testing	Nutritional Behavior		

See what is not covered, such as:

Routine and preventive care, pre-existing conditions, cosmetic or elective procedures

Reference

https://www.petinsurance.com/?_gl=1*vvzkvs*_ga*MjM0MTc4MDc2LjE2NDk2MDc3NTg.*_ga_ZV4HIYD4X2*MTY0OTYwNzc1OC4xLjEuMTY0OTYwODIxOC4w

PUPPY VACCINATIONS



Puppy's Age	vaccination	Recommended vaccines depending on location, lifestyle and veterinarian
6 — 8 weeks	DHPP (vaccines for distemper, adenovirus [hepatitis], parainfluenza, and parvovirus)	Bordetella, Coronavirus
10 — 12 weeks	DHPP (vaccines for distemper, adenovirus [hepatitis], parainfluenza, and parvovirus)	Influenza, Leptospirosis, Bordetella, Lyme disease, Coronavirus
16 — 18 weeks	DHPP, rabies	Influenza, Leptospirosis, Bordetella, Lyme disease
12 — 16 months	DHPP, rabies	Leptospirosis, Bordetella, Lyme disease
Every 1 — 3 years	DHPP	Influenza, Leptospirosis, Bordetella, Lyme disease
Every 1 — 3 years	Rabies (as required by law)	none

Reference K9 protocol from DR. Hummel

<https://www.westbrookah.com/services/wellness-preventative-care/vaccinations/>

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF CANCER IN DOGS

Having your dog prescreened at the vet and monthly screening done at home are key to an early diagnosis and treatment. If your dog has any of the following signs please see your veterinarian and remember your dog's life could depend on your fast response to something that might seem simple.

Increased thirst
& urination

Sudden and irreversible
weight loss, no appetite

A new lump or bump

Limping or
change in gait

Difficulty
urinating / bloody
urine

Vomiting or diarrhea

Lethargy

Change in size,
shape, or
consistency of
an existing lump

Coughing or
difficulty breathing

Difficulty eating
or swallowing

Straining to
defecate, thin
ribbon like
stools

Sores that do
not heal

Abnormal
discharge from the
eyes, mouth, ears,
or rectum

Depression

Resources:

<https://sashvets.com/pet-advice/10-early-warning-signs-of-cancer-in-dogs/>

<https://www.pethealthnetwork.com/dog-health/dog-diseases-conditions-a-z/10-signs-cancer-dogs>

DOG CANCER PREVENTION TIPS

Avoid
secondhand
smoke

Avoid long-term
exposure to sunlight

Avoid exposure to
lawn chemicals,
paints, and solvents

Monitor your
pet's weight

Get your dog's family
history

Avoid exposure
to asbestos

Resources:

https://www.morrisanimalfoundation.org/sites/default/files/files/2018-03/00000-MBS_UTF_CancerChecklist_F1.pdf

<https://www.nwfailynews.com/story/lifestyle/columns/2018/06/03/checklist-to-help-prevent-cancer-in-pets/12014409007/>



WHAT TYPES OF CANCER CAN AFFECT CERTAIN BREEDS



Boxers

Hemangiosarcoma Lymphoma Mast cell tumors Melanoma osteosarcoma

Golden retrievers

Hemangiosarcoma Lymphoma Mast cell tumors Melanoma osteosarcoma



Doberman pinschers

Hemangiosarcoma Melanoma osteosarcoma



Labrador retriever

Hemangiosarcoma Mast cell tumors osteosarcoma



Basset hounds

Lymphoma squamous cell carcinoma



Boston Terriers

Mast cell tumors Melanoma



Bulldogs

Lymphoma Mast cell tumors



German shepherds

Hemangiosarcoma osteosarcoma



Saint Bernards

Lymphoma osteosarcoma

Scottish Terriers

Lymphoma Melanoma

Reference <https://petcureoncology.com/get-the-facts-7-pet-cancer-myths-debunked/>

PRESCREENING AT HOME PROCEDURE

Prescreening your dog at home is the best way to recognize if something is changes in your dog. It is not only a time to examine your dog, but it is a great time to spend with your dog. Make it fun, so your dog thinks you are just having a fun playtime with them. Try to get into the routine of doing this once a month that way; if something changes in your dog, you will hopefully catch it in time. This will also be an excellent time to give your dog a bath, check and clip their toenails, brush their teeth (which needs to be done regularly), and brush their fur (more often in longhair dogs). Go ahead and make it a “spa” day for your dog. Below are the areas you need to look at to do your dog’s physical exam at home. If you notice anything of concern, write it down, take pictures (it might be hard to find that exact spot later, or the image can help you document changes that might be happening) if you can, and let your vet know what you have found.

What to examine

Steps for an at home prescreening procedure

- **Eyes:** The white part of their eyes needs to be white, not red or irritated looking. The pupils (which is the hole in the center of the colored part of the eye) should be the same size and should constrict (close) to a pinpoint when a bright light is shined in the eye. The cornea (which is the clear dome on the top surface of the eye) should be clear, not cloudy. The eyes should be moist, but there should be no discharge or gunk present, and their eyes should not be sunken back.
- **Ears:** Look at the ear flaps inside and outside; are there any cuts or sores that look new? If yes and you are not sure how or when it happened, your vet should look at them. Look down your dog’s ear canal and see if it is red, if there is wax build-up, or if there is pus. Does it sound like there is water in their ear when you rub it? Is their ear draining? Does your dog’s ear smell funny? Is your dog scratching their ear more than normal? Are they shaking their head more than normal? If you answered yes to any of these, your dog could have a bacterial or yeast infection, and they should have their ears checked out by the vet.
- **Oral health:** Now you need to check your dog’s teeth and gums by opening their mouth and looking at their teeth and gums from the side. The gums should be pink and free of bumps and ulcers. Their teeth should be white; however, if their teeth are yellow or have a brown buildup, this is excess tartar. You also want to check for any loose teeth (especially their adult teeth) or broken teeth that could be causing pain or be infected. If your dog has bad breath, it could mean they have periodontal disease. Next, you need to check their lips to see if you find any cracks, swelling, or lumps/bumps. Good oral health starts from day one, and you need to brush your dog’s teeth three times a week to help clean and free of buildup. You can only use toothpaste specifically for dogs as human toothpaste has xylitol which is toxic for dogs.
- **Check heart:** The average heart rate for a dog should be between 80 and 120 beats/minute depending on breed and level of excitement. The best and easiest way to check your dog’s heart rate is to put your hands on the sides of your dog’s chest and feel his heartbeat. Count the number of pulses in 15 seconds and multiply by four.
- **Massage time:** Rub gently under your dog’s jaw and see if you feel any lumps and bumps, which could indicate enlarged lymph nodes or salivary glands. Now slowly rub your dog’s neck down to their chest. You want to check to see if you feel any lumps, bumps, or crusty spots on their skin. You will now continue to rub your dog’s chest slowly over their back and belly. You are looking to see if you feel any lumps, bumps, cuts, sores, or dry or crusty skin. Now move to their legs and gently massage each leg from top to bottom; make sure you don’t see or feel any of the previous indications or swelling or if they react in pain. Make sure their fur has no odor and that the coat is shiny and smooth. Look at your dog’s tail to see if you notice any fur loss or dry or cracking skin. You will also check to ensure your dog is hydrated by pulling the skin over its neck or back into a “tent” and releasing it; it should return quickly to its original position. If it returns slowly or remains slightly tented, your dog may be dehydrated. While you are giving them their massage, you want to also look for fleas and ticks. If you have a long hair dog, brush them out and take care of any mats they might have so that mats don’t get out of control. If they are matted, take it slow to comb them out. If you have a bad knot that you are not able to get out through brushing, then it is a good idea to cut it. If you are going to cut your dog’s hair, make sure you have sufficient lighting and blunt scissors to make sure you don’t cut your dog.
- **Belly up:** While your dog is on their back, continue to look them over. You are going to check their abdomen (stomach area) by simply placing your hands on your dog’s abdomen and gently pressing all over their stomach. By pressing in all directions, you are looking for any abnormal feeling lump/bump, dry cracking skin, any cuts, and change in skin color or bruising. This should not hurt them, so if they react as if it is hurting, stop and note where they reacted to pain. You will also want to check the mammary glands (breast) in male and female dogs for any swelling, discharge, lumps, or bumps. You will need to inspect their penis and sheath for male dogs to make sure they do not have any swelling or discharge. For female dogs, you will need to look at their vulva and note any swelling, discharge, changes in color, bumps, or redness. Let your vet know if your dog has been cleaning themselves (private area) more than normal.
- **Check the paws:** While your dog is on its back, check its paws. You are going to check their paws, nails and paw pads and look for any sores, burns, cuts, or torn fingernails. If necessary, trim any excess fur between paw pads; most importantly, feel for any swelling. Also, check to see if you notice any musty odor, have been licking at their feet, and note if their fur is discolored or if they have any pain or pull away from you when you touch a specific location. A standard dog foot has a slight “Frito” smell, but it should not smell moldy or unpleasant.
- **Take their temperature:** Using a digital rectal thermometer (the ear type is less reliable, and mercury thermometers can break), lubricate the end with a biocompatible lubricant (K-Y jelly, Vaseline, etc.) and gently insert it into the rectum, about 1 inch for small dogs and about 2 inches for larger ones. If it does not slide in easily, do not force it. A average temperature is between 100° and 102.5° F. If their temperature is ever over 103°F or under 99 °F, contact your vet immediately.

Resources

<https://pethelpful.com/dogs/What-is-Involved-in-a-Physical-Exam-for-Your-Dog>

<https://thebark.com/content/seven-step-diy-dog-checkup>

<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/giving-your-dog-a-thorough-home-check-up>

Wags for Awareness – A Dog’s Cancer Journey Troop 2367 Marissa D’s Gold Award Project 2022

GSACPC

PRE-SCREENING AT VET
REMEMBER TO GET YOUR DOG PET INSURANCE

What to do	Steps to pre-screening with your vet
Family history	It is important to get as much of your dog's family health history as possible. This will help your vet focus on any health issues your dog might be predisposed to.
Make regular wellness visits	It's important to make regular visits, especially during the first 18 months of your dog's life. During this time, your dog will get their immunizations, rabies vaccine, microchipped, get fixed (if you are not going to breed them), and their nails trimmed. Also, discuss your dog's healthy weight, proper food and treats, exercise, basic training, and proper oral health care.
Lab work	Lab work is an easy way for your vet to check for certain cancers and other illnesses. Your vet should do regular lab work, so it is important to work with your vet to set up lab work, especially for middle-aged and older dogs. Common tests for cancer might include fine needle aspirate of masses or fluids, biopsy, rectal exam, bloodwork (including complete blood count and chemistry profile), PET or CT scan, and radiographs.
Blood type/ blood donation	It is important to find out what blood type your dog is. This is important to know early on in your dog's life; that way, the vet will know what blood they can safely have in case of an emergency. Like humans, dogs have different and rare blood types, and not all dogs can receive any blood type. Also, like humans, dogs can donate their blood for other dogs to have in an emergency or for surgery, or you can store your dog's blood for their use in the future. Ask your vet about blood donation and blood storage to see if it is an option for your dog.
Start an imaging routine	Imaging tests are an easy way to detect cancer. Chest x-rays and ultrasounds are an easy, painless, and more affordable (less expensive than a CT scan) way to not only check your dog for cancer or other abnormalities, but it will create a history for your dog to see if anything starts to change in your dog's health. Talk to your vet to determine what age and how frequently you should have these tests scheduled. These tests are especially important for seniors and for certain breeds who are at a higher risk of cancer (Golden Retrievers, German Shepherds, Boxers, and Labrador Retrievers)
Genetic screening test	Talk with your vet about the different screening test they can perform on your dog.
Second opinion	If you are given a cancer diagnosis (or any other diagnosis), and you are not comfortable with a diagnosis, get a second opinion from a specialist or oncologist, as your dog's life could depend on it. We were told our dog was bitten by a snake or a bug when in fact, that diagnosis was wrong; we got a second opinion, and our dog was diagnosed with hemangiosarcoma cancer.
Support group	Cancer can be scary, but you need to know you are not alone. Join a support group to help you on this journey. I have created my own support group for my Girl Scout Gold Award project www.facebook.com/groups/wagsforawarenessadogscancerjourney/ I have several of my dog's doctors, including her oncologist, on my support group to help answer the medical questions you will have. Also, my goal for my support group is for everyone on there to support all the members and for everyone to come together as new cancer-fighting family.

References

<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/wellness-testing-for-dogs>

https://www.petco.com/content/petco/PetcoStore/en_US/pet-services/resource-center/health-wellness/all-about-dog-cancer-testing.html

IDEAL DOG BLOOD DONOR

DID YOU KNOW DOGS CAN DONATE BLOOD?

(Please note these are general ideas of what you should do every place is different on what they want and don't want. Please just use this as a guideline)

Over 50 lbs. (and at a good weight for their size)

Not on any medication

Free of blood-borne diseases and parasites

A dog can donate blood 5 – 6 times a year

Have never received a blood transfusion

In good general health and current on all vaccinations (proof is required)

Consistently taking heartworm and flea preventative

Pass comprehensive blood screening, blood typing, and infectious disease screening.

Must be between 1 year and 6 years old when entering the program

Never have been pregnant before

References [https://indyvet.com/canine-blood-donor/#:~:text=Canine%20blood%20donors%20must%20meet,vaccinations%20\(proof%20is%20required\)%3Bhttps://www.vmc.umn.edu/about-us/specialties-services/blood-donor-program](https://indyvet.com/canine-blood-donor/#:~:text=Canine%20blood%20donors%20must%20meet,vaccinations%20(proof%20is%20required)%3Bhttps://www.vmc.umn.edu/about-us/specialties-services/blood-donor-program)