

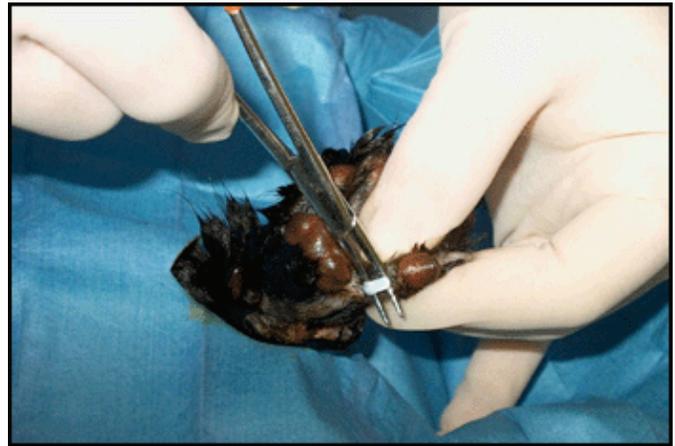
Declaw/Tendonectomy

The “traditional cure” for cats that scratched furniture, carpets, or people is the declaw surgery. A declaw, or onychectomy, is the amputation of the last bone of the toe, including the nail. Usually the surgery is performed on the front paws only; in very special circumstances it may be performed on the rear feet as well.

With your cat under a general anesthetic, the toes are clipped of most of the hair and scrubbed for surgery. The last bone and nail of each toe is carefully removed using a very sharp scalpel blade. A small suture (stitch) is placed through the skin of each toe and the entire paw is bandaged. The cat is given a very powerful analgesic (pain killer) before waking up from surgery and allowed to sleep for several hours. The procedure is quite painful and sometimes the cats require a longer hospital stay than just one night to keep them as comfortable as possible.

Tenectomy of the deep digital flexor tendon (also called a “tendonectomy”) is a viable, and some consider more humane, alternative to declawing. Also performed under general anesthesia, in this procedure a tiny incision is made on the underside of each toe and a small piece of the tendon is removed, which prevents the cat from extending it’s nails and therefore cannot do any damage with them.

The skin incision is closed with a dissolvable suture; the paws are not bandaged. The cat is given a mild analgesic and usually by the evening after surgery they are up and walking around, unaware they have just had surgery.



A tendonectomy involves separating out a tiny piece of the white tendon from each toe, as shown above

Once back at home, we recommend using a non-clumping cat litter for 2 weeks while the feet heal. Usually the cats leave their feet alone and do not lick or chew too much, but if your cat is chewing or licking at her feet or seems to be having trouble walking please contact our hospital immediately.

Cats that have had either surgery on their feet have a reduced ability to defend themselves and climb trees or fences; these cats must be kept indoors or be at higher risk of serious injury from other animals. If your cat has a tendonectomy it will be necessary to trim the toenails on a regular basis; we can do this for you if it is difficult.