

ANIMAL FIRST AID

First aid for dogs and cats is just like first aid for humans. Anyone can use first aid to save an animal's life. The following information is in no way a comprehensive view of first aid. It is meant to give an idea of what can be done in certain situations. Your veterinarian must be contacted immediately after an injury.

First Aid Kit:

First, it is necessary to put together a first aid kit to have on hand for any kind of emergency. Essentials for a first aid kit include:

- A book on dog and cat first aid
- Muzzle
- Needle and thread
- Razor blade (wrapped in paper for protection)
- Small blunt end scissors
- Tweezers
- Hemostats
- Rectal thermometer
- Tongue depressors (to be used as splints)
- 3 cc oral syringe and 10 cc syringe for cleaning and flushing wounds
- Eye dropper
- Safety pins
- Rubber gloves
- Tourniquet
- Splints
- Washcloth
- Nail trimmers
- Sterile non-stick pads
- Cotton gauze pads
- Cotton gauze wrap
- Vet wrap
- Ace bandage
- Band-Aids
- First aid tape
- Cotton balls and swabs
- Small bottle of isopropyl alcohol
- Bottle of hydrogen peroxide for cleaning wounds and inducing vomiting
- Iodine
- Eye wash
- Antibiotic ointment
- Vaseline
- Benadryl 25 mg tablets
- Towel or blanket

It is important to learn safe handling methods to protect yourself and your pet before attempting any kind of first aid. A suffering or scared animal is a potentially dangerous animal. Dog handling methods include those that restrain the dog from moving or running away and muzzling him so he can't bite. A quick muzzle you can use if you don't have a purchased muzzle is a 2-3 foot length of strong and soft material (scarf or gauze). Make a loop in the center of the material, and quickly slip the loop over the dog's muzzle and tighten it. Bring the two ends down and cross them under the muzzle and bring them back behind the head. Using a bow, tie the ends behind his ears. In restraining cats, you have to be careful of their claws as well. Using a big thick towel to wrap a cat up to prevent being bit or scratched is often necessary.

Before beginning any sort of first aid, it is important to know the normal vital signs of animals. To determine the heart rate and respiratory rate of an animal, you count the number of heart beats or breaths in a 15 second time period and then multiply by 4 to get the number per minute.

TEMPERATURE-100-102.5

HEART RATES-Large Breeds (>50 LBS)-70-120/minute
Medium Breeds (25-50 LBS)-80-120/minute
Small Breeds (10-25LBS)-90-140/minute
Toy Breeds and Cats (<10LBS)-100-160/minute

RESPIRATORY RATE-15-30/minute

Also, it is important to know not to give any medications to your pet without first consulting one of our veterinarians.

CPR/Heimlich Maneuver:

There may be a time in your pet's life when you will need to use CPR or the Heimlich maneuver to save him. The first step in CPR is to obtain an open airway. Pull the tongue straight out of the mouth. Ensure the neck is straight by bringing the head in line with the neck. Check to see if the animal is breathing on his own. If not, perform 2 breaths by holding the mouth closed and breathing into the nose. Give 12 breaths a minute or 1 every 5 seconds. To perform chest compressions, lay your animal on his right side with his back towards your knees. Check for a pulse in his groin or feel for a heart beat on his chest. DO NOT attempt chest compressions if his heart is beating. If there is no heart beat, place your hands where the left elbow touches his chest, approximately in the middle of the rib cage. Compress his chest 15 times followed by 2 breaths. Continue this until you feel a heartbeat and he starts breathing on his own.

When you start CPR and you give 2 breaths and nothing goes in, check the back of the animal's throat for any foreign object causing choking. If you suspect something is there you need to perform the Heimlich maneuver. Turn the animal upside down with his back against your chest. Wrap your arms around him, just below the rib cage and grasp your fist with your other hand.

Using both arms, give sharp thrusts to the abdomen. After 5 thrusts, check his mouth and airway for the object. Continue until he starts to breathe.

Basic Wound Care:

For any wound, your first priority is to stop the bleeding. Restrain the animal to protect yourself from injury. Apply direct pressure using a sterile gauze pad or a clean cloth. Do not keep lifting cloth to see if the bleeding has stopped, you will break up the clot that has been forming. If the pad or cloth becomes blood-soaked, do not remove it. Place an extra pad on top of the first one. If the bleeding doesn't stop with pressure, elevate the wound. If the bleeding is severe with spurting blood, you need to apply direct pressure to the artery supplying the wound area. Pressure points can be found on the upper inside (armpit) of the front legs, on the upper inside of the hind legs, and the underside of the tail. When the bleeding stops, apply a sterile dressing. Do not probe or clean the wound.

For superficial small wounds, you can clean the wound with an antiseptic. Using a syringe, squirt the solution onto the wound. Continue cleaning until the wound seems clean and you don't see any surface debris. Soak some gauze pads with antiseptic solution and gently pat the wound. We need to examine every wound as there may be damage to tissues under the skin that isn't evident.

First Aid For Burns:

For superficial and deep burns do not apply butter, grease, fat or ointments to the burns. Flush or immerse the burn area with cool water as soon as possible. Dry the area by gently patting it, do not rub it. Call us to have your pet examined by one of our veterinarians as soon as possible.

First Aid For Fractures:

The only necessary first aid for fractures is the immobilization of the break before transporting your pet to us or one of the emergency hospitals as quickly as possible. Signs of possible fractures include limping, walking on 3 legs, swelling along one of the bones, and pain to the touch. Signs of fractured ribs include painful or labored breathing, frothy discharge from the nose or mouth, and swelling. Simple fractures are breaks where the bone hasn't poked through the skin. Compound fractures are breaks that have torn through flesh and punctured the skin. There is increased risk of infection and blood loss with these fractures. Please contact us immediately if you think your pet has broken a bone.

First Aid For Vomiting:

If your pet vomits, the first step is to call us, it is always best to do an exam. We may advise you to withhold all food and water for 12-24 hours if your pet is well hydrated. This allows the gastrointestinal system the rest it needs to settle down. If there hasn't been any vomiting during this rest time, then you can start feeding small amounts of water. If your pet can keep liquids down, the next step is to begin feeding small amounts of a bland diet (boiled chicken and white rice). If the liquid

or food is vomited, stop treatment and call us. If there is no vomiting, continue to slowly increase the amount of food given.

In some situations, you might need to induce vomiting to get rid of toxins or noxious materials that your pet may have ingested. Do not induce vomiting right away. First call us or an emergency clinic for advice. Do not induce vomiting if your pet is already vomiting, has lost consciousness, has trouble breathing or is too weak to stand. Also, do not induce vomiting if your pet swallowed bleach, drain cleaner, or a petroleum distillate, or if he swallowed the material more than two hours ago. It is okay to induce vomiting if one of our veterinarians advised you to do it during a phone call or if your pet has ingested antifreeze less than 2 hours ago.