

Pet First Aid

In an emergency, first aid is not a substitute for veterinary treatment. However, if you are unable to get your pet to a veterinarian, knowing basic first aid could save your pet's life. Always seek veterinary care following first aid attempts.

Bite Wounds

Treatment/Action

Approach the pet carefully to avoid getting bitten. Muzzle the animal. Clean the wound with large amounts of water. Wrap large open wounds to keep them clean. Apply pressure to profusely bleeding wounds. Bite wounds often become infected and need professional care.

Call veterinarian.

Bleeding

Treatment/Action

Apply firm, direct pressure over the bleeding area until the bleeding stops. Avoid bandages that cut off circulation.

Call veterinarian immediately.

Breathing (pet stops breathing)

Treatment/Action

Check to see if the animal is choking on a foreign object (see CHOKING).

If an object is removed from the throat and the animal still is not breathing, place the animal with its right side down. Close the animal's mouth and exhale directly into the nose, not mouth, until the chest expands. Cover the nose with a handkerchief or a thin cloth if preferred. Exhale 12 to 15 times per minute. At the same time, apply heart massage with the other hand. The heart is located in the lower half of the chest behind the elbow of the front left leg. Place hand over the heart and compress the chest 1 to 2 inches for large animals, 1 inch for small animals. Apply heart massage 70-90 times per minute.

Call veterinarian immediately.

Burns (chemical, electrical and heat)

Singed hair, blistering, swelling, redness of skin

Treatment/Action

Flush burn area immediately with large amounts of cold water. Apply ice pack for 15-20 minutes.

Call veterinarian immediately.

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Choking

Difficulty breathing, excessive pawing at mouth, blue lips and tongue.

Treatment/Action

Look into the mouth to see if foreign object in throat is visible. Clear the airway by removing the object with pliers or tweezers, being careful not to push it farther down the throat. If the object remains lodged, place your hands on both sides of the animal's rib cage and apply firm, quick pressure. Or place the animal on its side and strike the side of the rib cage firmly with the palm of your hand 3 or 4 times. Repeat this procedure until the object is dislodged.

Call veterinarian immediately.

(see BREATHING).

Diarrhea

Treatment/Action

Withhold food for 12-24 hours. Give ice cubes only.

Call veterinarian.

Foreign Objects Imbedded

Porcupine quills

Sharp, hollow shafts.

Treatment/Action

Quill cannot be pulled out without anesthesia.

Call veterinarian.

Foxtails

A barbed seed, sometimes visible in eye, nose, mouth, throat or skin, causing severe irritation.

Treatment/Action

Foxtails are usually too deep to remove without general anesthetic.

Call veterinarian.

Fractures

Pain, inability to use leg

Treatment/Action

Muzzle animal and control bleeding. Watch for any sign of shock. **DO NOT TRY TO RESET A FRACTURE.** Transport the animal to the veterinarian immediately using a stretcher.

Call veterinarian immediately.

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Heat Stroke

Rapid or difficulty breathing, vomiting, high body temperature, collapse

Treatment/Action

Place animal in a tub of cold water, gently soak with a garden hose or wrap in a cold, wet towel.

Call veterinarian immediately.

Insect Bites

Onset of swelling, itching and pain within one hour of bite

Treatment/Action

Remove stinger and apply cold packs. If isolated from veterinary care, a topical cortisone or an anti-inflammatory ointment can be rubbed on area of bite. A previously prescribed antihistamine may be given orally.

Call veterinarian.

Poisoning

Vomiting, convulsions, diarrhea, salivation, weakness, depression, pain

Treatment/Action

Write down what the pet ingested and how much. Immediately call the veterinarian or poison control center. Do not induce vomiting or attempt treatment without direction from the doctor.

In the case of poisoning on the fur/skin from oils, paints or chemicals, wash the animal with mild soap and rinse well.

Call veterinarian.

Seizures

Salivation, loss of control of urine or stool, violent muscle twitching, loss of consciousness

Treatment/Action

Move pet away from any objects that could be harmful. Use a blanket for padding and protection. Do not put yourself at risk by restraining the animal during the seizure. Time the seizure; it usually lasts only 2 or 3 minutes. Afterwards, keep the animal calm, quiet and cool.

Call veterinarian immediately.

Shock

Irregular breathing, dilated pupils

Treatment/Action

May occur with serious injury or fright. Keep animal gently restrained, quiet and warm with head elevated.

Call veterinarian immediately.

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Snakebite (poisonous and non-poisonous)

Rapid swelling, skin puncture, pain, weakness, shock

Treatment/Action

Stop all exercise to prevent spread of venom. Clean area. Many poisons damage nerves or body tissue on contact.

Call veterinarian immediately.

Vomiting

Treatment/Action

Withhold food for 12-24 hours. Give ice cubes for two hours after vomiting stops. Then slowly increase the amount of water and foods given over a 24-hour period.

Call veterinarian.

EQUIPMENT

Muzzle

Use a strip of soft cloth, rope, necktie or nylon stocking. Wrap around the nose, under the chin and tie behind the ears. Care must be taken when handling weak or injured animals. Even normally docile pets will bite when in pain. Allow animal to pant after handling by loosening or removing the muzzle. Do not use a muzzle in a case of vomiting. Cats and small pets may be difficult to muzzle. A towel placed around the head will help control small pets.

Stretcher

A door, board, blanket or floor mat can be used as a stretcher to transport injured or weak animals.