

PET FIRST AID

Would you know what to do if your pet was choking, broke a leg or was suffering from heat stroke? At times like these, seconds matter. Knowing what to do (as well as what not to do) can make all the difference in achieving a good outcome for your furry one. I hope this article can help prepare you for the unexpected mishaps that come with the territory of owning a pet.

First, have these numbers by the phone (and in your cell phone) ...

Your vet: know if they are available after hours.

24 hour emergency clinic: know how to get there.

Please call the clinic to let them know that you are on the way. This will give them time to better prepare for the arrival of your pet.

ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: 1-888-426-4435

There is a \$65 consult fee for this service.

Second, have a well stocked first aid kit. Keep it in the car so it is available for both home and travel. This kit can be used for people or their animals.

Pet First Aid Booklet or DVD: Review every few months so that you are ready!

Muzzle: Do **not** use if dog is vomiting, unconscious or having trouble breathing.

Slip Lead

Scissors

Tweezers: to remove foreign objects and/or ticks from skin and paws

Plastic syringe (10-20 cc): administer liquid meds; flush ears or eyes

Digital thermometer / lubricant: normal rectal temp is 100-102.5 degrees

Vinyl Gloves: to protect hands and prevent contamination of wounds

Tourniquet: for severely bleeding wounds on leg

Hemostat: to pull out objects from back of throat

Gauze rolls and pads: 3 and 4 inch

Adhesive Tape 1 inch

Cotton balls

Tongue Depressors

Penlight or Flashlight

Tick Remover

Nail Trimmer

Styptic powder or pencil

Towel: for burns, heat stroke or to stabilize fractures

Vet wrap: a stretchy bandage roll to wrap and stabilize injuries

Hydrogen Peroxide 3%: cleans wounds, induces vomiting

Saline solution: to flush eyes/ears or wounds

Hydrocortisone Cream

Antibiotic ointment: inhibits bacterial growth

Instant Cold Pack: to reduce swelling or pain

Compact thermal blanket: prevents shock by preserving body heat; also protects car if pet is vomiting or bleeding

Household Medications for Dogs

<u>Product</u>	<u>Used For...</u>	<u>Dosage</u>
Buffered Aspirin	Pain	5 mg per lb every 12 hrs
Benadryl	Itching and Insect stings	1 mg per lb every 8 hrs
Dramamine	Motion sickness	Up to 50 mg every 8 hrs

Hydrogen Peroxide 3% Induce vomiting

How much to give is not an exact science. The goal is to give them enough until they vomit. A few “glugs” of hydrogen peroxide should do the trick.

Pepto Bismol	Upset stomach Diarrhea	1tsp per 5 lbs every 6 hrs or 1-2 chewable tablets
Loperamide HCL	Diarrhea	2 mg tablets – 1 or 2 tablets

Canine Emergencies

Choking: Look into the airway. If you can see the obstructing object, use a hemostat to pull the object out. Avoid putting your hand in dog’s mouth. You could be bitten and fingers can sometimes push the object in even further.

If unable to view the object, give your dog 5 abdominal thrusts by locking your hands under the rib cage and vigorously thrusting in and upward toward the chest cavity. Then, look into the airway and retrieve object. Repeat if object not visible.

Fractures: Check for swelling, lameness or deformity of limb. Splint the limb by wrapping a towel around it and secure in place using vet wrap. Head to the vet for x-rays and further treatment.

Bleeding Wounds: Put on gloves and use gauze to apply direct pressure to the wound. Hold firm pressure continuously. No “peeking” every couple minutes. You are trying to give the body time to form a clot (do for 5-10 minutes at least). If necessary, add more gauze if initial gauze bandage becomes saturated. Do not remove gauze! You could be removing the clot that is slowing the bleeding.

If you are alone, you can apply a wad of gauze and secure in place firmly using vet wrap to create a pressure dressing. Then quickly (but safely!) transport to the vet.

If there is an object embedded in the bleeding wound, such as a knife or stick, do **not** remove the object! It could be stuck in a blood vessel. Removing it could lead to profuse bleeding. Let the vet remove it in a controlled setting where surgical equipment is available. You should only apply gauze and vet wrap to stabilize the object until it can be removed at the vet facility.

If a dog is hit by a car, your first priority is scene safety! Check for oncoming traffic before you approach the animal. If other people are on the scene, assign one of them the sole task of being alert to traffic hazards. You are of no use to the injured animal if you are lying on the pavement next to them! If possible, use a rigid board or blanket to transport the dog to a vehicle. Try to keep the spine stable (as little movement as possible) and in alignment.

Burns: Apply a cool wet towel or cold pack. Secure with a loose bandage if necessary. Transport to vet.

Heat Stroke: Apply a towel soaked with cool water over the back of the dog. You may also apply an ice pack to the neck and groin areas. Transport to vet.

Poisoning: If you suspect your dog has ingested something toxic, do not hesitate to seek emergency assistance. Sometimes an animal may appear completely normal for several hours or even days after the incident. Don't panic. Take 30-60 seconds to safely collect and have at hand any material involved. Also, collect some of the material your pet may have vomited or chewed in a sealable plastic bag. Find the ingredient list if possible. Check for severe vomiting or diarrhea, swollen tongue, burned lips, seizures, lethargy, coma.

Call the ASPCA Poison Control Center (1-888-426-4435). Be ready with the following information...

The species, breed, age, sex and weight of the animal

The animal's symptoms

Information regarding the exposure, including the agent (if known), the amount of the agent ingested and the length of time elapsed since the exposure. Have the product container/packaging available for reference if possible.

If the agent ingested is a corrosive or petroleum based product, do **not** induce vomiting! This will only result in further injury to the esophagus and oral cavity, or possible aspiration pneumonia. In this situation, there are other procedures to be done. Transport to the vet or emergency clinic as soon as possible.

If you are advised by your vet or the poison control center to induce vomiting, get the syringe and 3% hydrogen peroxide from your first aid kit. Use a turkey baster or a paper cup to administer. You can even pour it directly from the bottle. Repeat in five minutes if no response, up to three or four times. Most dogs will vomit after 2 to 3 doses.

If your dog is **very** lethargic, unresponsive, having seizures or difficulty breathing, do **not** force the peroxide down their throat. If a dog in this condition started to vomit, they could not protect their airway and the vomit would likely go into their lungs causing even worse problems! Phone ahead and transport immediately to your vet or emergency clinic.

Eye Injuries: Check for squinting, swollen lid, closed eye, excessive tearing or frequent rubbing of eye. Flush the eye with saline solution for several minutes. Do **not** remove penetrating objects! Stabilize object and transport to vet.

Ear Problems: Check for shaking of the head, tilting the head or pawing at ear. You may attempt to flush the ear with syringe and saline solution. Do not stick Q-tip into ear! This may force foreign object further down into ear canal making it harder for vet to retrieve.

Hopefully, this article on pet first aid has provided some useful information for you. Remember, above all, do no harm! If in doubt about how to help your injured pet, use the “scoop and run” philosophy of EMS personnel. Pick up your pet and transport to a vet facility ASAP – doing so in a calm and safe manner, of course! May your beloved pet never suffer the injuries listed in this article, but if they ever do, be ready. Check to see if your local American Red Cross offers a pet first aid course. It could make all the difference for the dogs you love!

Submitted by Susan Rogers, R.N.
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