

The Bark & Mew

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Veterinary Hospital

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PET FIRST AID

As a pet owner, it is important to be educated on first aid measures in case your pet has an emergency. Make sure that you are taking precautions to prevent an accident: always keep your dog on a leash, keep your cat indoors, pet-proof your house to ensure poisons are stored out of reach, and make sure your pet is microchipped or appropriately collared. But we all know that accidents happen, so we have some great pet first aid tips for keeping your pet happy and healthy!



"Peaches" says: "Be careful out there friends!"

Stop. Assess. Act.

Pay attention to your pet's behavior. Although they cannot tell us what is wrong, we can certainly watch their body language to determine when they are not feeling well. Pay special attention and call your veterinarian if your pet shows signs of any of the following:

- lack of appetite/weight loss
- collapse/weakness/lethargy
- panting/difficulty breathing/coughing
- restlessness/pain
- increased thirst/urination
- blue or pale gums
- dilated pupils
- vomiting/diarrhea

The sooner you can get your pet in to see your vet, the sooner they can diagnose the problem and help your pet!

When you notice something is wrong with your pet, first make sure it is safe for you to rush to their aid. Follow these steps to best ensure everyone's safety:

1. Cautiously approach your pet (or someone else's pet)! A pet in pain may not behave like they usually do.
2. Check the ABCD's: Clear their **A**irway, check for **B**reathing and **C**irculation (pulse), and assess their level of **D**isability (injury).
3. Administer first aid. Control bleeding, treat burns, immobilize broken limbs, administer CPR, etc.
4. Get to a veterinary hospital ASAP. Keep phone numbers for your primary vet, an emergency vet, and Animal Poison Control on hand so that you can be prepared.

Next, it is important to know what the normal vital signs for your pet are:

For small and medium-sized dogs:

- Pulse: 70-120 beats/minute
- Respiratory Rate: 15-30 breaths/minute
- Temperature: 100-102.5° F

For large-sized dogs:

- Pulse: 50-120 beats/minute
- Respiratory Rate: 15-30 breaths/minute
- Temperature: 100-102.5° F

For cats:

- Pulse: 100-120 beats/minute
- Respiratory Rate: 15-30 breaths/minute
- Temperature: 100-102.5° F

To find your pet's pulse, use a timer or watch with a second hand, place 2 fingers on the inside of your dog's thigh (near where the body and leg meet) OR place your hands on both sides of the chest cavity (just behind the elbows), count the beats for 15 seconds then multiply that number by four. This will give you the number of beats per minute. (Note: it

may be more difficult to assess a pulse on a cat.)

To calculate your pet's respiratory rate, count the number of full breaths they take in 15 seconds and multiply that number by four.

If you can't feel a heartbeat, make sure there isn't one by feeling for a pulse before starting chest compressions, otherwise this can cause extreme harm to your pet. Also check for breathing and unconsciousness. To check your pet's breathing, place your ear next to their nose and mouth to listen for breathing, place your hand on your pet's chest to see if it rises with breath, or feel for air movement out of your pet's nostrils.

If you have confirmed that your pet has no heartbeat and there is no breathing, follow these steps:

1. Open your pet's airway gently by extending their neck and clear any obstructions.
2. Check for a heartbeat again by placing your hands on both sides of your pet's chest and feel for a beat for 10 seconds before moving to step 3.
3. If there is no heartbeat, begin chest compressions and mouth-to-muzzle breathing.

To start chest compressions:

1. Lay your pet on their side. Interlock your fingers with your palms facing down to administer compressions. Give 1-2 compressions per second for 30 seconds. (For dogs less than 30 pounds, administer compressions directly over the heart. For dogs over 30 pounds, administer compressions on the widest part of the chest.)
2. Next, wrap both hands tightly around your dog's muzzle. Give five breaths by blowing directly into the nose.
3. Repeat until your pet's heart starts beating on its own.
4. Get your pet to your vet or an emergency vet ASAP! It may help to call ahead to make sure staff is prepared to help you and your pet.

Although CPR may save your pet's life, keep in mind that the chances of reviving your pet with CPR is less than 10%



(even if a veterinary specialist does it). As previously discussed, pay attention to your pet's behavior; when you notice something isn't quite right, feel free to call your primary veterinarian to see if they feel you should bring your pet in for an exam.



"Maisie" watches as "Greyson" gets himself into trouble.

Build Your Own First Aid Kit

Many households have a general first aid kit in case of an emergency. Most of these items also work great if your pet has an emergency. Make sure to stock up your kits with these items for your furry friend:

- **A fresh, unexpired bottle of 3% hydrogen peroxide:** Not only does this product come in handy for wounds, but it can also help in the event your pet ingests something poisonous. Accidental poisoning in pets occurs thousands of times per day, so it is wise to keep this product in stock in the event you need to induce vomiting. However, consult your primary veterinarian or Animal Poison Control before inducing vomiting, as this can make your pet worse in some cases!
- **A bottle of liquid dish soap:** A mild, liquid soap is great in case your pet comes in contact with a poisonous substance that can seep through their skin, like motor oil. Bathe your dog immediately to prevent any side effects to the poisonous substance.
- **A can of tuna (in water) or a can of chicken broth:** Some household items (like Poinsettias and glow sticks) can cause drooling and foaming of the mouth for your pet. By giving your pet canned tuna or chicken broth, it can safely flush out the mouth and esophagus without using a hose or spray.
- **A few cans of dog/cat food and bottled water:** It is a good idea to keep a few cans of dog/cat food and some bottled water handy in case you have to leave your house quickly! Make sure not to keep cans that require a can

opener or kibble because if you're in a rush you're not likely to remember a can opener and dry kibble can go rancid over the years.