

Emergency Pet Care and First Aid

No one wants to think about it, but emergencies can happen to our beloved pets at any time or place. It is important to know the appropriate steps to take so that you are calm and in control of the situation when something goes wrong. First aid is immediate and temporary care that you can provide to an injured animal prior to transporting them to a veterinarian for continued medical care.

Prepare a first aid kit!

Whether you have a new addition to the family or a pet that has been with you for years, it is important to always be prepared for accidents and emergencies. In a waterproof bag or box, make sure you have the following items always on hand:

- Phone number for your veterinarian and a 24-hour emergency clinic
- Health and vaccination records
- Thermometer
- Gauze squares
- Cling wrap or vet wrap
- Medical tape
- Disposable gloves
- Bandage scissors
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Triple antibiotic ointment
- Blanket

Recognizing that something is wrong:

You are the one person in the world who knows and understands your pet the best. It is important to have a feel for what is normal and what is abnormal in their behavior and health. Use that knowledge and your common sense when attempting to recognize a medical emergency. Watch for:

- Crying, whining, or yelping
- Bleeding or obvious deformities
- Unusual odors in the pet's environment (e.g. gas, smoke, or chemical)
- Unusual behaviors such as dizziness, confusion, tremoring or vomiting
- Signs of shock (e.g. rapid, weak pulses, unconsciousness, cool limbs, or difficulty breathing)

Emergency action steps:

Assess the environment! Is it safe for you to approach the animal in question? Be alert for dangerous situations such as heavy traffic, downed power lines or other aggressive animals. Do NOT move or touch an animal if your safety is in question.

Do not hesitate to call for help! Call your regular veterinarian or emergency care facility. It is NOT advisable to call 9-1-1 for animal related emergencies. If you are concerned about poisoning or toxicity you can call the Pet Poison Helpline (1-800-213-6680, fee) to obtain additional information and advice.

Once you are sure that the situation is safe and you have telephoned a medical professional, provide first aid to the animal and transport them to the nearest veterinary facility for continued care.

The ABCs of basic first aid:

A: Airway – check for a patent airway. If you are worried about choking or aspiration, carefully do a finger sweep in the back of your pet’s throat to try and dislodge any kind of foreign material.

B: Breathing – is your animal having difficulty breathing? Look for deep abdominal effort or shallow, gasping breaths.

C: Circulation – You can assess your dog’s pulses on the inside of their upper thigh. Normally they should feel strong and synchronous. Also, feel your animal’s paws, are they cold and stiff or warm?

Other things that you should assess:

Temperature: The normal temperature for dogs and cats should range from 99-102 degrees Fahrenheit.

Control bleeding: Carefully apply pressure to a wound to slow hemorrhage.

Mucous membranes: Lift up your dog’s lip and check the color of their gums. Pink is a healthy color but white or blue are concerning. Don’t get confused by black pigment that many animals have!

And most importantly, remember to **STAY CALM!** Your pet can sense it when you are distressed and they will respond to your overall attitude. If you stay cool and collected it will be easier to handle your pet in times of distress.

The veterinarians and staff at Animal Medical Care understand that emergencies can be a stressful time for you and your pet and we will help guide you through the process and answer any questions you may have!