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## **Emergencies and Emergency First-Aid**

Outlined below, you will find a list of some potentially life-threatening emergencies that your pet may experience at some time in life. Keep in mind that this is only a partial list and that other serious emergencies could occur. Please remember that any time you have a pet emergency or if you *think* you might have a pet emergency, you should contact us immediately. The information provided is not meant to be a replacement for the professional medical treatment of a serious medical emergency.

### ***Life- Threatening Emergencies***

#### **Allergic Reactions (Anaphylaxis)**

Allergic reactions can be caused by medication ingestion, insect bites, foods, or common allergens (e.g. pollen, ragweed, hay, straw, etc.). Some allergic reactions are minor, others are very severe. An allergic reaction that begins as minor can quickly develop into a very dangerous situation. Any pet with a suspected allergic reaction should be seen by a veterinarian as soon as possible. Contact us immediately.

#### Symptoms

- Agitation
- Scratching/ rubbing
- Hives/ swelling
- Vomiting and/ or diarrhea
- Collapse
- Seizures
- Unresponsiveness

#### What you can do

1. Keep the pet as calm as possible.
2. Do not allow the pet to scratch or rub affected areas, as this may cause additional trauma to the tissues.
3. Continually monitor respirations and heart rate. Begin CPR, as needed.

#### **Back Injuries**

Back injuries can be caused by car accidents, kicks, dog fights, falls from significant heights, or other traumatic events.

#### Symptoms

- Deformities of the back or spinal column
- Inability to move or walk
- Severe pain
- Lack of pain response
- Lack of anal tone (open anus)

#### What you can do

1. Keep the pet as calm as possible.
2. Wrap sheets or blankets around a rigid board or hard plastic surface.
3. Keeping the pet as still as possible, carefully move the pet onto the board for transport.
4. Place a blanket over the pet to prevent heat loss or shock.

5. To secure the pet to the board, place tape, cloth, or rope over the pet and under the board.
6. Contact us, and transport the pet to our emergency hospital immediate medical treatment.

### **Bleeding**

Bleeding can be caused by trauma or injury to any area of the body. The immediate goal is to stop or at least slow down the blood loss.

#### What you can do

1. Apply gentle pressure to the wound(s).
2. If you place a wrap, do not wrap too tightly. Never restrict circulation of breathing. Continually check below the wrap to ensure the limb is not swelling.
3. If blood begins to seep through the initial bandage, do not remove the bandage and place another. Place additional absorbent material on top of the original bandage.
4. Check for signs of shock. (Refer to Shock section)
5. Administer CPR, if needed.
6. If bleeding does not stop with 5 minutes or is soaking bandages within 1-2 minutes, transport immediately to our emergency hospital.

### **Bloat**

Bloat usually occurs when a medium to large breed dog exercises vigorously before or after consuming large amounts of food or water. The stomach fills with air and food/water, causing the stomach to flip. As the stomach rotates, the blood supply is restricted.

#### Symptoms

- Swollen, painful abdomen
- Vomiting, or retching
- Restlessness
- Excessive panting
- Drooling

How to prevent it- do not allow your pet to consume large amounts of food or water, especially before or after exercise. Feed smaller meals twice daily, as opposed to one large meal a day. Prevent strenuous exercise for 1 hour after eating.

### **Blood Sugar Irregularities**

What is it? - either elevated blood sugar levels (hyperglycemia), or low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). Blood sugar irregularities can be caused many issues, including diabetic crisis, liver disease, tumors, or infections.

#### Symptoms of Hypoglycemia

- Shaking
- Weakness
- Disorientation
- Seizures
- Change in level of consciousness

What can you do on your way to our emergency hospital - rub corn syrup or sugar water on your pet's gums (do not force them to swallow if they have an altered mental status).

How to prevent it- for small or toy breeds, ensure that the pet (especially young puppies) are fed on a frequent basis. Do not allow your puppy to go for more than 6-8 hours without eating.

#### Symptoms of Hyperglycemia

- Increased respiratory rate
- Weakness
- Inappetance
- Sweet- smelling breath
- Vomiting

### **Cardiac Emergencies**

Cardiac irregularities can be chronic (long-tem) or acute (sudden onset). Most cardiac abnormalities require immediate medical attention. Contact us immediately.

#### Symptoms

- Coughing, worsening when pet is laying down
- Fainting/ syncope
- Severe pain
- Bloated abdomen
- Inability to move either or both of the hind legs
- Hind limbs that feel cool or cold to the touch

What can you do on your way to our emergency hospital- For a cat, check the toes and paw pads on the rear feet. Check if these areas are cold to the touch or have a blue color-tone. Check for signs of shock and treat accordingly.

### **Choking**

*Contact us and begin transporting a choking pet to our emergency hospital immediately.* If you have someone else to drive while you attend to the pet, you can attempt to dislodge an object from the throat while you transporting. Choking can be caused by a foreign object becoming lodged in the throat, trauma to the neck or throat, swelling of the tongue, or coking on the pet's own vomit.

#### What can you do on your way to our emergency hospital

1. Open the pet's mouth and sweep with your finger from side to side to see if you are able to feel a foreign object in the back of the mouth
2. If the choking pet is a cat or small dog, lift up the pet's hind legs and hold the pet in a vertical position- this may help to dislodge a foreign object
3. Close your fist and place it on the abdomen where the ribs end (just below the breast bone). Rapidly, pull up with your fist five times. Administer a sharp blow to the back (between the shoulder blades) with the palm of your hand.

#### Symptoms of Choking

- Pawing at the face or rubbing the face on the ground
- Pacing or inability to get comfortable
- Breathing difficulty
- Noisy or wheezing respirations
- White or blue gum color
- Collapse
- Unresponsiveness

How to prevent it- do not allow your pet to play with toys or objects that are small enough to fit into the mouth and become lodged in the throat (ie. bottle caps, “Bouncey” balls, tennis balls, sticks, rocks, etc.)

### **Heat-Related Emergencies**

Never leave your pet outside for extended periods of time in the heat. Always allow pets access to fresh water when they are outside. Do not leave your pet in a parked car, even if it is only mildly hot outside.

#### Symptoms of Heat-related Emergencies

- Panting
- Reluctance to move
- Bright or dark red tongue and gum color
- Skin that is warm or hot to the touch
- Bloody diarrhea
- Collapse or unresponsiveness

#### What can you do on your way to the our emergency hospital

1. Remove the animal from the heat. Move to an air conditioned area and place a fan near the pet.
2. Rinse the pet with cool water. *DO NOT use cold water or ice. DO NOT place the pet in an ice bath. Cooling the pet down too quickly can cause the heart to stop or other adverse reactions.*
3. Take the pet’s temperature.
4. Immediate transport to our emergency hospital is **STRONGLY** recommended even if you are able to get the pet’s temperature down. Contact Us.

### **Hit- by-Car Emergencies**

Before approaching any pet that has been hit by a car, ensure that there is not danger to you or further danger to your pet. A pet that has been hit by a car may attempt to get up and run/ walk away- this does not mean that there is not a life-threatening injury. It is important to take your pet to our emergency hospital immediately after your pet has been hit by a car. Just because there are no obvious external injuries does not mean they should not receive prompt medical attention. Contact Us.

#### If the pet is unconscious or unable to move

1. Check to ensure that the pet is breathing and that there is a heartbeat
  - a. If the pet is not breathing, begin rescue breathing immediately.
  - b. If the pet is not breathing and there is no heartbeat, begin CPR immediately.
2. Make note of the position of the body and whether there is any blood, urine, or feces around the pet. This information will be extremely helpful for your veterinarian to know.
3. Attempt to place the pet on a hard surface (like a board) to prevent further injury of the spinal cord/ column (see section on Back Injuries).
4. Apply pressure or any bleeding wounds.
5. Transport to our emergency hospital immediately.

### **Shock**

Shock is a state within the body resulting from an inadequate supply of blood and oxygen to the tissues and organs of the body. A pet in shock should be transported to our emergency hospital immediately.

### Symptoms of Shock

- Altered level of consciousness
- Weak or pounding pulses
- Low body temperature
- Pale, white, or grey mm color
- Increased capillary refill time
- Increased or decreased respiratory rate
- Increased or decreased heart rate

### What you can do on your way to our emergency hospital

1. Administer CPR, as needed.
2. If the pet is bleeding, attempt to control the bleeding.
3. Keep the pet warm during transport.
4. If no spinal injury is suspected, elevate the back end of the pet to help increase blood flow to the vital organs.

### **Seizures**

Seizures can be a very upsetting experience for both you and your pet. Seizures can vary from a mild episode during which the pet seems confused or disoriented, to severe during which the pet has wild convulsions. The pet may go into shock, and could potentially become unable to breathe. If your pet experiences a seizure, contact us as soon as possible.

### Symptoms of Seizures

- Nervousness or Anxiety
- Confusion
- Drooling
- Twitching or Convulsing
- Rigid Physical Stance
- Involuntary Urinating or Defecating

### Some Common Causes of Seizures

- Epilepsy
- Poisoning
- Tumors
- Brain Inflammation

### What you should do if your pet has a seizure

1. **Do not** touch the animal until the seizure has ended.
2. Remove all pets and small children from the area
3. Remove any objects that might cause injury if the pet thrashes
4. Do not attempt to hold the pet's tongue; the pet will not bite its tongue, and you could become injured by doing this
5. Record the length and severity of the seizure, and report it to the veterinarian
6. If you find that the pet has stopped breathing, administer CPR.

## **Administering CPR to Your Pet**

If your pet stops breathing, it may be necessary for you to administer life-saving CPR. If you are uncomfortable with administering CPR yourself, get the help of someone nearby who can perform the technique.

### **Check the Pet's Airway**

1. Lay the pet on its side
2. Extend the head and neck by pulling the chin back, straightening the neck
3. Open the pet's mouth, grasp the tongue and pull it straight out
4. Reach your hand into the pet's mouth carefully, and clear any debris (If a large amount of fluid is present, use cotton balls or cloth to clear the airway)

### **Check for Breath**

Once the airway has been cleared, place both hands around the pet's muzzle and hold its mouth closed

Take a hard, deep breath and place your mouth over the pet's nose

Exhale the full breath into the pet's nostrils while watching for the chest to rise

Repeat this breathing every five (5) seconds, stopping after every few breaths to see if the pet has begun to breathe on its own

If the pet is not breathing at this point, or if it is breathing very shallow breaths, continue with the assisted breathing

### **Begin Chest Compressions**

The position and force of chest compressions is dependant upon the weight and size of the animal:

#### **Cats and small dogs**

1. Place the pet on its right side with the chest facing you
2. Put your left hand under the chest, with your palm behind the elbow. Place your right hand to the opposite of your left
3. Compress the chest approximately one inch with the base of your palms. Use your fingers to keep the pet from sliding back

#### **Medium dogs**

1. Kneel on the floor and place the pet on its right side with its **back** facing you, touching your knees
2. Place your left arm under the pet's body and rest your elbow next to the abdomen; your palm should be at the spot behind the pet's elbow
3. Lean over the dog, and place your right palm on the top side of the chest just opposite your left
4. Begin compressing the chest approximately one inch with the base of both palms. Use your fingers to keep the pet from sliding

### **Large dogs**

1. Kneel on the floor and place the pet on its right side with its back facing you, touching your knees
2. Straighten your elbows and cup your hands together, interlocking your fingers
3. Place your palms at the spot behind the elbow (on the side of the chest facing up)
4. Begin stiff arm compressions, and compress approximately 1 ½ to 3 inches in. Do not bend your arms

### **Rate of Breaths to Compressions**

If you are administering CPR alone:

- Cats, small dogs and medium dogs should have five (5) compressions to every one (1) breath
- Large dogs and giant breed dogs should have five (5) to six (6) compressions to every one (1) breath

If you are assisting another person with CPR:

- Cats, small dogs and medium dogs should have three (3) compressions to every one (1) breath
- Large dogs and giant breed dogs should have ten (10) to twelve (12) compressions to every one (1) breath

Alternate breaths and compressions. Check for a pulse and for breath after each set of compressions.

*CPR should be performed only when medically necessary. Although this information is general in nature, it is your responsibility to assess your pet's condition and determine if you should administer CPR. While it is a life-saving technique, please be aware that CPR can result in minor injury to the pet, and you assume all risk associated with its administration.*