

First Aid Guide for Your Dog

Introduction

Gosh, your poor pup. You've never seen him sick before and you are at a loss. Was it something he ate? Something you fed him? Does he have a bug, or something severely wrong? It's all a mystery.

Or the bigger mystery might be how to treat your dog that suddenly has a cut on his leg. You are running around with him at the dog park and he returns to you with a stick in his mouth and a cut on his leg. It's bleeding and you don't know what to do.

Unlike people, our dogs can't tell us when something hurts or when they have a stomachache or even when they have a headache. When they are hurt, we might be able to see they're hurt but not understand the depths of their pain. We can't ask what they need.

Knowing how to care for your dog when pain or sickness strikes will give you a peace of mind that many dog owners don't have. That's where this book comes in. We hope to give you some sense of how to care for your dog when the unexpected happens – your dog gets hurt or sick, or needs some other care. Consider it your primer in first aid for dogs.

Americans spend billions of dollars each year on veterinary care – an estimated \$9.8 billion in 2007, according to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association.

Wouldn't it be great if you could save just a few dollars out of your pocket each year by knowing how to treat your dog at home? Perhaps you might just save a few dollars by avoiding the very expensive emergency vet clinic on Sunday night and deferring treatment until Monday morning.

Now, we're not suggesting you learn how to cast your dog's broken leg, or that you learn how to treat parvo or cancer. We're mostly talking about everyday problems, little concerns, little bumps on the road to true dog health.

The bigger problems? You can help there too, by providing important and competent care until you can get your dog to the vet.

Here's what we'll cover:

Chapter 1 – Introduction. That's what you're reading right now.

Chapter 2 – What to do if your dog gets sick. Your dog might have a little cold, or something much more serious. Learning how to know the difference is essential. We'll offer tips on understanding what your dog's symptoms mean, and some tips for making your dog comfortable when he or she isn't feeling quite up to par.

Chapter 3 – What do to if your dog gets hurt. Not every little injury requires veterinary care. Or perhaps it does require care and you want to make your dog comfortable until you get to the vet. This chapter will help you make the distinction and give you tips for helping your dog stay comfortable and calm.

Chapter 4 – How to create a first aid kit for your dog. You can create a compact, yet very functional, first aid kit to keep in your car or home for emergencies. We'll show you how.

Chapter 5 – First aid 101. In this chapter, we'll give you some tips for CPR as well as other basic tips for helping your dog in his time of need.

When your dog gets sick

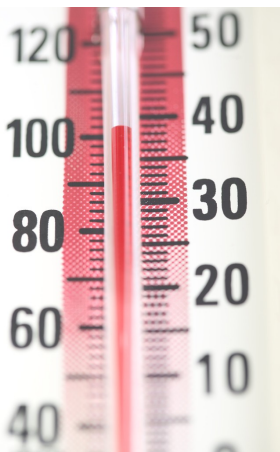
So your pup is feeling a little under the weather? How can you tell? It might be that he doesn't wake you up at 5:30 for your usual early morning walk, or seems lethargic and with little appetite. He might not want to eat much or just seem disinterested in much of the life going on around him.

Much like you feel when you're under the weather, right? The trick with our dogs, however, is they can't tell us what's wrong. They can't say their tummy hurts, or they feel nauseous. Worst of all, it's hard for you to know when to let them be sick at home, and when to cart them to the vet.

Let's look at a few crucial components of dog illness.

Temperature

It's a fallacy that you can't take your dog's temperature. It's also a fallacy that you have to take it rectally. Let's look at a few key dog temperature items of note:



To see if your dog has even a slight fever, check his nose first. Put your palm on the nose and check for warmth. Dogs' noses are usually anywhere from cold to just slightly warm and slightly wet.

If your dog has a fever, from slight to severe, his nose will be anywhere from very warm to hot and it will be dry. It might even feel a bit wrinkled (as fingers and toes are after being in a long bath).

A dog's normal body temperature is 99.5 to 102.5 degrees.

How to take your dog's temperature

Rectally

The most common type of thermometer used in dogs is a rectal mercury thermometer (though it's important to buy a new model that no longer actually contains mercury, but a non-toxic red gel).

To take a rectal temperature in your dog, follow these instructions:

- ✓ Lubricate the thermometer with some Vaseline or other lubricant that won't affect the thermometer's reading.
- ✓ Wear disposable gloves if have them. If you don't, be sure to wash your hands thoroughly both before and after you take your dog's temperature rectally.
- ✓ Have someone help to restrain your dog. If a dog moves vigorously or violently, the thermometer can break in the dog (which will require a visit to the vet).
- ✓ For the most accurate reading, slide the thermometer almost all the way into the dog, with only enough thermometer left out for you to hold onto. If you meet with a lot of resistance (stool), remove it and wait until your dog defecates.
- ✓ Be sure to slide the thermometer along the rectal wall and well into your dog to get that accurate reading.
- ✓ These types of thermometers require a few seconds to stabilize – taking a temperature this way generally takes between 1 and 3 minutes. Once you see a temperature register and stay there for about 15 seconds, you can be

sure you have an actual reading and remove the thermometer.

- ✓ If you have to pull the thermometer out and take the temperature again, be sure to shake the thermometer all the way down (well down below a dog's regular temperature) before inserting it again.
- ✓ Clean the thermometer when you are done with soap and water followed by an alcohol swab.

In the ear

Ear thermometers are usually preferred by dog owners, to avoid much of the mess and discomfort that can be caused by the rectal thermometers.

But there are a few cautions about using ear thermometers, most notably:

They are generally considered to be less accurate than rectal temperatures. You might want to take your dog's temperature in the ear several times to get a satisfactory reading.

The anatomy of the dog's ear makes getting an accurate reading more difficult. The dog's ear is built with a 90-degree angle between the ear drum and the ear canal exit, making it hard to get an accurate reading.

Here are some tips for getting an accurate reading from an ear thermometer:

- ✓ Don't pull the thermometer out until you hear an audible beep from the thermometer indicating the temperature has been recorded.

- ✓ To avoid the difficulty in getting that accurate reading from the dog's ear, gently pull the ear up and out to straighten the ear canal for the thermometer.
- ✓ Remember it will still take between 1 and 3 minutes to get a reading, just like with the rectal thermometer.

Do not use thermometers made for humans that are applied to the forehead for a temperature reading. The dog's fur makes these highly inaccurate and most definitely not recommended for use on dogs.

Do not ever try to use a thermometer in a dog's mouth. Your dog's sharp teeth will likely break it and if it's made of glass, your dog's tongue will get cut.

Diarrhea

According to veterinarians, diarrhea is the most common medical ailment for cats and dogs. Because there are a number of causes and reasons for diarrhea, it's important to pay attention when your dog is under the weather with an upset tummy.

Here are some things to watch and make note of:

- ✓ When did it start?
- ✓ How long is it lasting, or how long did it last?
- ✓ Did your dog eat anything unusual that would make him or her sick?

- ✓ Is it bloody?
- ✓ Does it have mucus in it?
- ✓ Are there any strange objects or foods in it that you can identify?

You can probably discern for yourself which of these qualities of diarrhea are worth worrying about, but definitely if any of these qualities are found in combination with a fever, consult your vet.

Constipation

The uncomfortable opposite of diarrhea, constipation can be highly uncomfortable if not downright dangerous for your dog.

Most dogs will defecate about 1-4 times a day, though some dogs can go 1 to 2 days without defecating without trouble.

Symptoms of constipation:

- ✓ Straining or painful defecation
- ✓ Anxiety
- ✓ General exhaustion
- ✓ Very dry and/or solid feces
- ✓ When you feed your dog the same amount of food, your dog will either not defecate or the amount will significantly decrease

There are a number of reasons why a dog will suffer constipation. They include:

- ✓ Feeding the dog bones
- ✓ Excessive physical exercises or activity
- ✓ Incorrect feeding
- ✓ A mechanical plugging of the intestine
- ✓ Increase in pancreatic activity

To be sure, if your dog suffers from constipation for any period of time, you should see your vet and find treatment for the dog, which can include enemas, laxatives and other measures.

If your dog seems to just periodically suffer from constipation, there are measures you can take at home to reduce the incidence. These include:

- ✓ Gentle, regular exercise
- ✓ A better ration of food
- ✓ Fiber-dense food

Vomiting

For many dogs, vomiting is just another thing on the “to do” list for the day. Because many dogs have a vomit reflex that allows them to vomit out anything that’s unwelcome, many dogs vomit often.

Even if your dog is a chronic vomiter, though, there are times and certain conditions that require concern.

First, let's look at the myriad of reasons why your dog might vomit. These include:

- ✓ A sudden change in the dog's diet, including new dog food
- ✓ A strange food or other item eaten by your dog
- ✓ A change in chemical balance which might be caused by renal deficiency, a bacterial infection or diabetes
- ✓ A nervous system reaction to stress
- ✓ A disease like parvo or distemper
- ✓ A head injury

Although many dogs vomit occasionally, anything more than occasional should be cause for concern.

If your dog is vomiting, here are some tips to help him (and you):

Stop feeding your dog for about 24-48 hours.

Watch to see if the vomiting subsides. If it does, slowly feed your dog small bits of food (dog food only, and nothing new now).

If your dog continues to vomit, consult your veterinarian. There are so many potential causes; you want to make sure you aren't endangering your dog by not getting quick treatment.

Once your dog stops vomiting, you should consider preventive measures. These include (but are not limited to):

- ✓ Making sure your dog is always current on vaccinations.
- ✓ Not feeding your dog before walking or training him or her.
- ✓ Not allowing your dog to gulp large amounts of food.
- ✓ Giving smaller rather than larger portions of food.
- ✓ Being conscious of things your dog might find in the home to swallow. Just as you would be with a toddler, be alert to things that could be swallowed (and subsequently thrown up).
- ✓ Changing dog foods gradually and following feeding instructions on the bag.

Heat stroke

Leaving your dog outside on a very hot (or very humid) day can be dangerous. Leaving your dog in a car under the same conditions can be dangerous or fatal, depending on the circumstances.

It's never a good idea to leave your dog unattended in a car on a hot day, but if your dog ends up with too much sun and is overheated anyway, here are some things you need to know about heat stroke.

The symptoms of heat stroke are fairly dramatic and they include:

- ✓ Weakness
- ✓ Staggering
- ✓ Salivating
- ✓ Wide eyes
- ✓ Rapid panting
- ✓ Collapse (in advanced stages)
- ✓ Mouth will appear dry and pale

If you suspect your dog is suffering from heat stroke, first take his temperature rectally. If it exceeds 106 degrees, then your dog is definitely suffering heat stroke. You must get him to the vet as soon as possible (ideally that means immediately) and in the meantime, get some cool water on your dog.



How do get the cool water on your dog will depend on your conditions, but ideally you'll be able to run a hose on the dog. Be sure the water contacts the skin and not just the hair, and run the water all over the body, not just the backside. So include the belly, the legs, even the mouth if your dog will tolerate it.

Poisoning

Dogs are by nature curious beings and like children, sometimes get themselves in trouble with poisonous products.

The most common type of poisoning to dogs is by pesticides and insecticides, followed by drugs and plants.

In fact, there are many plants that are highly dangerous to animals. If your dog is a grazer, you might want to exclude many of these plants from your home. Some of them include very popular plants like Aloe Vera, Amaryllis, Boxwood, Calla Lilly, Daffodil, English Ivy, Oleander, Sago Palm, and Yellow Jasmine.

If your dog has been poisoned, he might exhibit the following symptoms:

- ✓ Nervousness
- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Diarrhea
- ✓ Change in pupil size
- ✓ Difficulty breathing
- ✓ Stumbling
- ✓ Convulsions (in severe cases)
- ✓ Loss of consciousness (in severe cases)

If you suspect your dog is poisoned, call the emergency vet or the animal poison control center right away. Have handy your dog's vet information and if possible, information about what he or she ate.

Contrary to popular belief, inducing vomiting is not always the best way to proceed if your dog is poisoned. Some poisons are

caustic and can be extremely dangerous to vomit. Always follow the recommendation of the poison control center.

When your dog gets hurt

Dogs are busy creatures and just like children they sometimes get hurt or find themselves in predicaments that require first aid.

Knowing when your dog needs help and knowing what to do is great peace of mind for you (and perhaps for your dog as well).

This chapter is all about that. Learning to understand what your dog needs in an emergency and knowing what to do.

The first step, by the way, is to develop confidence. It might be scary if you see your dog bleeding, or in obvious pain. He might not want to be coddled by you, but might lash out by trying to bite you. If you develop confidence in your ability to help your dog, you won't be worried by such things. You'll know you have the knowledge and tools to help your dog in the way you know best.

In the next chapter, we'll discuss how to create a first aid kit for your dog. The items in the kit will help you perform necessary first aid tasks like the ones we outline in this chapter.

Bandaging your dog

Maybe you have taken your dog hiking or camping and he falls and hurts a leg or has a bleeding cut. Your job is to know how to help your dog and get him bandaged until you can get to a vet.

The dog's head

If your dog is bleeding at the head, the most common source is the ears, so your job is to control the bleeding there.

Here are some tips:

- ✓ Find some long strips of gauze, or tear a sheet into long strips.
- ✓ Wrap your bandage completely around the dog's head, pinning his or her ears to the head.
- ✓ You want the bandage to be snug, but not too tight, because you could block the dog's airway.
- ✓ Don't cover your dog's eyes. Keep them unobstructed. Covering the eyes can add unnecessary anxiety and fear.
- ✓ Once you have the bandage affixed and tied, tape it with whatever tape you have. Make sure you get some of your dog's fur in the tape. This will help the bandage stay on and the tape won't slip if it's affixed to hair.
- ✓ Check for tightness the same way you might with a collar – put two fingers under it and if you can slip those two fingers under, it's not too tight. If you think you could get more than two fingers under the bandage, unwrap it and do it again with a slightly tighter hold.

After you have attached the bandage, check your dog frequently for any breathing difficulties or swellings. Either or both could be caused by the bandage. In that case, remove the bandage.

Leg Bandage

A leg bandage is generally used when a dog is bleeding or has a broken leg.

- ✓ If there is a leg wound, begin by covering it with a gauze pad.
- ✓ After you have applied the gauze pad, if needed, wrap several layers of cotton from a roll of cotton around the leg. If your dog has a fracture, be sure to include the joint above and below the break in the bandage.
- ✓ After you have wrapped several layers of cotton, layer on several layers of stretch gauze. This should be snug, but not tight, and should help to compress the cotton. This will help stabilize the injury and reduce pain. If you make the bandage too tight, you will risk disrupting circulation.
- ✓ Finish your bandaging by adding a layer of bandage like Ace or adhesive tape. Just as with the head bandage, secure the top layer of the bandage by applying a layer of sticky tape. Again, make sure that you get some of your dog's fur in the tape so it stays put.

After you have wrapped your dog's leg, check frequently for coldness or swelling of toes. If you see either, or both, remove the bandage immediately.

Splints

Splints are used as additional support for bone fractures. Generally, you should only splint the front legs, because bandaging the back legs in a straight position can ultimately be detrimental to the dog. To splint your dog, follow these instructions:

First, follow instructions for bandaging the leg, found above.

- ✓ After the cotton and stretch gauze have been wrapped around the leg, place a straight piece of metal or a flat stick on either side of the leg and tape in place.
- ✓ If you don't have a stick or any metal, roll up a newspaper or magazine and use that instead. Don't make it too big, and tape into place.
- ✓ Cover the splint and bandage with an elastic bandage like Vet Wrap or an Ace bandage.
- ✓ Secure the top layer of bandage with sticky tape, again making sure you get some of the dog's hair in the tape so it stays in place.

Important note: If your dog injures or breaks the humerus (upper arm bone) or femur (thigh bone), bandages and splints do not help and can even do more damage. If you think your dog's injury is to the femur or humerus don't bandage or splint it. Seek veterinary care as soon as possible.

Burns

It's fairly uncommon for dogs to be burned from an open flame, but it can happen, particularly if the dog is sleeping near a fire or other flame. A dog can burn its paws when walking on a very hot surface and puppies can chew on electrical cords that can burn them and cause electrical shock.

Following are some tips for treating different types of burns.

Burns caused by heat

If your dog has a heat burn, as in caused by a flame, follow these instructions for treating it:

- ✓ Do not use butter, grease or other ointments on the burn.



✓

✓ Sock a cloth or rag in cold water and apply it firmly to the burn.

✓

Determine if the burn is very serious or not. A superficial burn will singe the fur but it fur won't come out of the dog, and the skin will be red. A serious burn is less painful than a superficial burn because nerves are usually damaged. The skin won't be red, but rather black, brown or white and the fur will pull out easily. If the burn seems serious, call the vet right away.

- ✓ In either event, be sure to keep the burn covered with wet cloths and cover the wet cloths with dry, thick towels. Keep your dog lying down and restrain him if necessary, particularly if the burn is serious.

- ✓ If your dog is not vomiting, give him plenty of fluids.

Burns caused by chemicals

- ✓ Wash the burn well with clean water, especially if the burn is around the dog's face.
- ✓ Apply a soothing ointment, like olive oil or other soothing something that will help with pain.
- ✓ If necessary, muzzle or restrain your dog before treating him or her. Chemical burns can be very painful.

Shock

Many dogs who suffer severe burns go into shock. Shock is a much more serious condition than people realize and it's not just a general feeling of malaise after an injury. The true symptoms of shock in your dog include:

- ✓ Collapse
- ✓ Coma
- ✓ Weakness
- ✓ Pale color of eyelids, mouth and lips
- ✓ A rapid but weak pulse (over 140 beats per second)
- ✓ Cool skin and legs
- ✓ Falling unconscious
- ✓ Dilated pupils

If you see any or all of the symptoms of shock, call your vet immediately, or take your dog to the nearest emergency veterinary care center.

Until you can get to the vet, take this interim care:

- ✓ If you haven't done so already, bandage or splint the injured area.
- ✓ Keep the dog's airways open and even give artificial respiration if necessary.
- ✓ Wrap the dog in a large, thick towel or blanket to regulate body temperature. If he is unconscious, keep his head as low as or lower than the rest of his body. Massage his legs.
- ✓ If he is conscious and restless (likely), keep him vertical and well wrapped.

If there is a delay before you can get to the vet (if you were camping, for instance), be sure to give your dog small amounts of tepid water (mixed with glucose, if you have some) every 30 minutes. If your dog is unconscious, convulsing or vomiting, don't give any fluids.

Head injuries

A dog can suffer a head injury in a number of ways: getting hit by a car, hit by sports equipment like golf clubs or a baseball bat, or being kicked by a horse.

Because your dog can't tell you what hurts and you can't ask the kinds of questions you might ask a person, it's hard to tell how severe your dog's head injury might be. Often dogs will give off the impression they are just fine, and it's hard to tell they have memory loss or other problems because you can't ask.

Because it is hard to get a feel for how injured your dog might be, it's important to get your dog to the vet as soon as you can if you suspect a head – and specifically, a brain – injury.

The signs that a dog's brain has been injured include:

- ✓ Wounds on the head and places where the head no longer appears to be symmetrical
- ✓ An altered or inappropriate response to touch or commands
- ✓ Unconsciousness
- ✓ Pupils that are of unequal size
- ✓ Blood or a clear fluid coming from the ears and/or the nose

If you suspect that your dog has suffered a brain injury, consider the following self-help measures until you can get to a vet:

- ✓ If your dog is unconscious, put him on his side with the neck and chest higher than his head
- ✓ If your dog is semi-conscious, he can be dangerous. He's in pain, scared and might react to both of these and lash out at you. Try to take him to the vet in a crate or other box if possible.
- ✓ Keep your dog's airway clear. If you have to, drop his head down to allow fluids to drain. Don't put your hand in your dog's mouth because you very likely can be bit.
- ✓ Try to control your dog's bleeding, but don't apply direct pressure if the skull is fractured (or you suspect it might be).

- ✓ Keep the environment quiet and don't offer your dog any food or water. You might just end up making your dog vomit.

Bites

Your dog could be the victim of a number of bites, from spider bites to the burrowing of ticks. Knowing how to treat them will help your dog be more comfortable and you possibly avoid a veterinary bill.

Ticks

If you and your dog are out and about a lot, your dog might get bit by a tick. They burrow into the skin and must be removed. Doing it just right is essential. Here's how:

1. Wear latex gloves so you can avoid direct contact with the dog's skin and the tick itself. You could contract disease from the tick or the dog's skin.
2. Feel your dog all over to see if there are more ticks you need to take care of. Feel for lumps around the ears, head and neck. The tick will feel like a small pea under the skin.
3. Once you know where the ticks are, ask someone to help divert your dog because you might encounter a little resistance if not.
4. Grab the tick with tweezers and pull it out with a steady pulling motion. Pull straight out and be gentle; if you pull too hard can break the tick's body away from its head and leave the head lodged in the body. If this happens, your dog's skin can become inflamed and develop an infection.

5. Get rid of the tick! You can do this by burning it, or squishing it into a tissue and flushing it down a toilet. Don't smash with your foot or your bare hands. The idea here is to get rid of the tick without encountering any disease.

6. Rub some antiseptic ointment on the bite. Remember to wash your hands thoroughly even though you were wearing gloves.

Bees

Dogs and bees have an uncommonly curious relationship. Dogs and puppies, quite simply, like to snap at them and often eat them, while the bees fire back by stinging the dogs on their tongues, heads and ears.

If your dog gets stung and doesn't seem to have any reaction, you probably don't have much to worry about. But here are some tips if your dog eats bees or gets stung and seems to be in pain or having a reaction.

Remember that even if your dog doesn't suffer any swelling as a result, the sting is painful and could cause some momentary swelling.

If the bee leaves a stinger in the dog, try to remove it as soon as possible, if it's accessible. If the stinger is in your dog's mouth, you'll have to make a judgment call about whether or not you want to try and remove it.

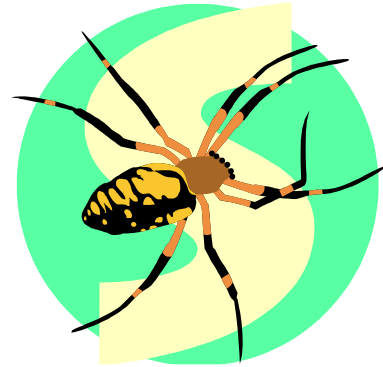
To remove the stinger, grip it with a pair of tweezers and gently pull it out.

Once the stinger is removed, make a paste of baking soda and water and apply that to the sting area. Consider using an ice pack as well to reduce swelling and pain.

Snake bites

If your dog gets bit by a spider, it's not a cause for concern, but if the spider is a black widow or a brown recluse spider, the venom can be very dangerous or even fatal to your dog.

If you think or know your dog has been bit by a poisonous spider, it could be very dangerous. Signs that the spider bite was poisonous include:



- ✓ Vomiting
- ✓ Signs that your pet is distressed
- ✓ Progressive muscle weakness
- ✓ (At its worst) coma

There isn't much you can do at home. You need to get your dog to the vet right away, and utilize emergency vet services if it's after hours or on a weekend or holiday. This isn't something to play around with. Until you get to the vet, apply cold compresses or ice to the bite.

First aid kit for dogs

For you to feel confident in knowing how to help your dog in case of emergency, creating a first aid kit is essential. It's like having a first aid kit at home for all the humans – if something should happen, you'll know what to do, and know you have the tools to do it.

Although you can purchase a ready-made kit at pet stores and online, we recommend making your own. You can customize



the kit to your particular needs, your environment and your dog's needs.

Say your dog is a fan of eating bees and you often have to apply a baking soda and water paste. Having a little container of baking soda in your kit will make all the difference. That's not likely to be an item you'll find as standard in store-bought first aid kits.

So, here is a suggested emergency first aid kit. Note that you might (hopefully) never use most of the products in the kit, but you will have them should you need them. If you take your dog many places with you, be sure to keep this in your car. Depending on your needs, you might want to have identical kits at home and in the car.

In addition, add whatever items you think might be useful, from your dog's favorite kind of chewy toy to the aforementioned baking soda.

Emergency first aid kit for dogs

- Benadryl
- Cotton swabs or Q-tips

- Band-Aids
- Ace Bandage
- First aid tape
- Vet Wrap (2-inch and the 4-inch width sold for horses)
- Cotton gauze wrap (1 ½-inch and 3-inch width)
- Cotton gauze pads
- Pepto Bismol tablets (not liquid)
- Razor blade (wrapped in paper or the kind that comes in a paper sleeve)
- A selection of oral syringes (these are good for giving medicine, getting solution into ears, etc.)
- New Skin liquid bandage (good for patching abrasions on the dog's foot pads)
- Matches
- Tweezers
- Rectal thermometer (be sure to get one made just for dogs)
- Mild eye wash (eye rinsing solution)
- Small bottle of rubbing alcohol
- Small bottle of hydrogen peroxide (3%)
- Antiseptic or alcohol wipes
- Small jar or tub of Vaseline
- Small pair of blunt end scissors (children's scissors will work here)
- Antibiotic cream (like Betadine, Bacitracin or the like)
- A selection of various sizes of safety pins
- A needle and thread
- Hemostat (which is useful for pulling ticks, large splinters, thorns, etc.)
- Something to help re-hydrate your dog, like Gatorade or Pedialyte
- Muzzle, if you think you might need it
- Disposable gloves
- Old rags
- A large towel or blanket to use either to wrap your dog up or to use as a stretcher

- Vet information, including phone numbers, hours and the like. Include information for emergency services as well
- If your dog is on medication, always bring his medications with you if you are headed out of town or on a hike
- Keep a list of your dog's medications in the first aid kit in the event an emergency vet asks for it

As you can see, creating a first aid kit for your dog can be a daunting task at first. Once you have everything put together, however, you likely won't have to think much about it again.

When you use items, be sure to make a note to replace them so your kit is always ready to use in the event of an emergency.

First Aid 101

All of this might seem a bit overwhelming, especially if you are a new dog owner or you have never considered the notion of dog first aid before. It doesn't have to be.

In this chapter, we'll give you some helpful tips for helping your dog in an emergency. Take a deep breath and read on. We promise it doesn't have to hurt.

Pain

If your dog gets hurt, you might not know if he's in pain or not. A dog can't tell you and will often show no signs of pain at all. While babies are born knowing innately how to indicate they are uncomfortable, a dog doesn't have that luxury. While we might complain endlessly about our aching back or sore hip, dogs just don't tell us anything.

Some dogs will act out when in pain, by trying to bite you or lashing out in some other way. Other dogs will do nothing, becoming silent and still. You won't necessarily know which way your dog leans until he is tested. Then you'll find out.

There are a few signs to look for, however. If your dog exhibits a few of these signs after being injured, assume that he's in pain. They include:

- ✓ Restlessness
- ✓ Panting even when resting
- ✓ Avoidance of certain activities, or a reduced activity level

- ✓ Body posture – if your dog hunches his back, he might have back pain or abdominal pain
- ✓ Drooling
- ✓ Loss of appetite or a decrease in appetite

Your vet can give you medicine to give your dog for pain, but there are some homecare things you can do. They include:

- ✓ Massage, but only very gently near the area of injury
- ✓ Cold and hot compresses, used in the same way you might for your own pain

Muzzle

It's a good idea to have a muzzle on hand in your first aid kit, but if you don't have one and need to muzzle your dog, you can fashion one yourself.

Keep in mind that it's never a bad idea to muzzle your dog if your dog is hurting or scared. Even if your dog is gentle and has never shown signs of biting, if your dog is scared or in pain, he might bite. Muzzling protects both of you.

To make a muzzle, find a strip of soft cloth, a necktie, rope or nylon stocking. Wrap the item around the nose, just under the chin and then wrap it behind the ears. If your dog is quite injured be very careful not to cause more pain.

If your dog is vomiting, don't muzzle him.

CPR

If your dog needs CPR, don't shy away. It's much like giving CPR to a human, but with a few different needs because your dog is, well, a dog.

Always think of the ABCs of CPR – that is, airway, breathing and circulation.

Let's take these one by one:

Airway

If your dog has stopped breathing, check the mouth and throat to be sure they are clear of foreign objects. Try not to put your fingers in the dog's mouth – even an unresponsive dog may bite on instinct.

If the airway is blocked, do this:

- ✓ Lay your dog on his side
- ✓ Very gently try and tilt the head back to extend the head and neck, but be careful – you don't want to overextend the neck in case there is some neck trauma.
- ✓ Move the dog's tongue out of your dog's mouth, as best you can. Let it hang to the side of the mouth as if your dog is panting.
- ✓ Very carefully use your fingers to quickly sweep for any foreign object or to remove vomit from the dog's mouth.
- ✓ If you believe there is an object obstructing the airway, perform the Heimlich maneuver.

Breathing

If your dog is breathing, you don't need to continue rescue efforts further (for example if you removed a foreign object and your dog is now breathing). If he's breathing, let him get comfortable in any way he wants.

If he's not breathing, you need to begin rescue breathing.

Once again, make sure the neck is straight, but not overextended.

If your dog is medium to large size, you'll be performing mouth-to-nose breathing. Close your dog's mouth and lips by putting your hand around the lips and holding his muzzle closed.

Put your mouth over the dog's nose. If your dog is under 30 pounds, cover his mouth and lips with your mouth. Your mouth will form a seal.

Exhale as forcefully as you can. Give four to five breaths very quickly.

Check to see if your dog is breathing normally. If not, or if his breathing is very shallow, repeat the above process.

For dogs over 30 pounds, give about 20 breaths per minute.

For dogs under 30 pounds, give 20-30 breaths per minute.

Circulation

After you have completed the breathing exercises, check to see if your dog is breathing. If he is, you can stop now and help your dog get comfortable while you contact the vet or drive there.

If he's not breathing, you need to begin chest compressions. For most dogs, the best position is with the dog lying on his side on a hard surface. If your dog is barrel-chested (like a bulldog or pug), CPR is best done with the dog on his back. You'll have to figure the best position for your dog as you perform CPR.

If you have to move your dog to a place with a hard surface, like a sidewalk, do so now. If your dog is on a soft surface, the chest compressions won't be as effective. A hard surface is best.

If your dog is less than 30 pounds, follow these instructions:

- ✓ Put your fingertips or palm over your dog's ribs at the point where the raised elbow meets the chest. Do your best to find this.
- ✓ Kneel down next to your dog and position yourself so the chest is near you.
- ✓ Compress your dog's chest at a rate about 1 inch twice per second (small dogs need rapid compressions)
- ✓ Begin 5 compressions for each breath. After 1 minute, stop and check for your dog's heartbeat. Continue with compressions if there is no heartbeat yet.

If your dog is 30 to 100 pounds, follow these instructions:

- ✓ Kneel down next to your dog with his back nearest to you.
- ✓ Extend your elbows and cup one of your hands on top of the other.
- ✓ Place your cupped hands over the ribs at the point on the dog's chest where the raised elbow meets the chest.
- ✓ Compress your dog's chest 2-3 inches at a rate of 1 ½ to 2 times per second.
- ✓ Begin with 5 compressions for each breath. Check for a heartbeat after a minute and continue with compressions if you don't detect a heartbeat.

If your dog is over 100 pounds:

Perform CPR the same as you do for larger dogs, except:

- ✓ Compress the chest about once per second
- ✓ Apply 10 compressions for each breath (note the difference here). Check for a heartbeat after 1 minute and continue with compressions if you don't detect one.

Continue to perform CPR as you head to the vet if necessary, but be aware that after 20 minutes, the chances of the dog surviving are quite slim.

Mood

That's your mood, not your dog's mood.

It can be stressful when your beloved pet is hurt or sick. You are worried, scared and unsure how to handle the dog and yourself. Learning to stay calm is essential.

They say that dogs are particularly tuned into humans' emotions and stress levels. If you begin screaming when your dog gets hurt, several things can happen:

- Your dog senses your stress and goes into stress mode himself.
- Your dog becomes scared and will be more likely to attempt to bite you or lash out in some way (even if he doesn't intend to hurt you).
- You are so flustered, you can't think straight, which in turn affects the care you can give your dog.
- You are too nervous to provide the veterinarian enough accurate information for them to do their job.

In all, your stress level will directly or indirectly affect everything else. When your dog gets hurt or is sick, how can you keep your calm? Try these techniques:

- ✓ First, take a deep breath. Literally, take 10 seconds to calm yourself down by taking a deep and full breath. Then slowly exhale before taking stock of the situation.
- ✓ Second, make note of what happened and how, even as you begin helping your dog. You will need as much accurate information as possible when you talk to the vet.

- ✓ Try to get help from whoever might be around. Even perfect strangers will likely be willing to help you calm your dog down, get help or provide water if asked.
- ✓ As soon as you can, jot down your observations and experience. Again, the vet will appreciate however much information you can provide.
- ✓ Focus on what you need to do to help your dog. Sometimes focusing on how to fix something is a way to divert your attention from the stress the situation is causing you. Slowly and methodically figure out what you need to do and set about doing it.