

A Dog Owner's Guide to First Aid

Karen's Canine Kitchen
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A Dog Owner's Guide to First Aid

The Boy Scout's motto – Be Prepared – gets it right. Preparation is the key in any situation. Emergencies can happen at any time and when it involves the health of a loved one, including our pets. Quick action can be critical to averting disaster.

Many of us are very familiar with first aid procedures when it comes to people. We have first aid kits in our homes and carry them in our cars but we don't always do the same for pets. As responsible pet owners, it behooves us to learn what we can do when our beloved pets have an accident or sudden illness.

This report is intended to be used for reference only. It is **not** a medical manual. The information contained is intended to help you cope with an emergency and not as a substitute for a competent veterinarian's care. If you think your pet may have a serious medical condition or injury, seek professional medical help.

Basic Procedures

Restraints

An injured pet is frightened and will need to be restrained. There are three reasons for humanely restraining your pet

1. It will restrict your pet's movements and prevent them from making the injury worse.
2. It protects you from being bitten or scratched.
3. It will keep them stationary so their injury can be examined and treated.

By becoming familiar with the basic techniques to restrain your pet, you will greatly improve their chances for recovery in an emergency. As an added bonus, you will probably find yourself using them when treating minor illnesses such as ear infections and regular grooming like nail clipping.

Muzzles

First and foremost among restraints is the muzzle. No matter how gentle and loving your dog may be, an injured animal bites reflexively. You can always purchase a commercial muzzle at your local pet supply store. They come in multiple sizes for just about any pet. If you don't have a commercial one handy you can easily make them.

If your dog has a long nose, all you need is any long piece of material such as a leg from an old pair of pantyhose, a long piece of a gauze bandage, a tie or even a leash works well. Wrap the cloth around the dog's jaw from the bottom and tie a single knot on the top of his/her nose. Bring both ends back down to the bottom of the jaw and tie another single knot. Bring both ends behind their neck, under the ears at the base of the skull and tie a bow. Keep a pair of scissors handy. If your pet starts to vomit you need to remove the muzzle immediately to prevent choking.

Pugs and other short-nosed breeds are more difficult to muzzle. They just don't have enough nose. Try using a pillow case for these dogs (also works with cats). Simply slip the pillowcase over their head and gently hold it closed around their neck. They will end up biting the pillow case and sometimes they will calm down just because they can no longer see what is happening. You can also use the pillow case to confine their front legs to keep them from scratching. This procedure is especially useful with cats.

The following procedures usually require two people. One will hold the pet while the other treats the injury. Restrain small pets on a raised surface about waist level high, such as a table or counter. Leave larger animals on the floor and kneel beside them.

Reclining Restraint

To use the reclining restraint, lay your pet on his/her side with the injury facing up. Grab the ankle of the front leg that is against the floor and gently press your forearm across his/her shoulders. Use your other hand to grab the ankle of the back leg that is against the ground and gently press your forearm across the hips. This technique is recommended for breeds with prominent eyes like a Pekingese because holding these types of dogs around the neck produces pressure that could cause his/her eyeballs to pop out. This also works well for larger dogs.

Hugging Restraint

This technique is just like it sounds. First, put your arm under and around your dog's neck and draw his head toward your chest. Use your other arm to reach under his belly and around his chest. You will be hugging your dog close to your body. You can also reach over the back and around the chest. This technique works best with dogs over 20 pounds. Use it when you need to immobilize the legs, back, chest and abdomen.

Stretch Restraint

With one hand grab your pet by the scruff of his/her neck. The scruff is the loose skin at the back of his/her neck just below the base of the skull. With your other hand grab both of the back legs. Gently stretch the animal and hold them against the table top. This particular technique works well with small dogs and cats.

Kneeling Restraint

Earlier we mentioned that breeds with prominent eyes such as Pekingese and Pugs should not be restrained by putting pressure on his/her necks. Excessive pressure can cause his/her eyes to pop out of the sockets. With these types of dogs use a kneeling restraint. Put the dog on the floor between your

knees. They should be facing away from you as you are kneeling. Put one hand on top of his/her head and use the other hand beneath the jaws. This restraint also works well when trying to give pills to cats.

First Aid Techniques

Rescue Breathing

If your dog has stopped breathing (but the heart is still beating) you can help him/her using artificial respiration. If your dog is very cold they may breathe much more slowly than normal so make sure they are not breathing before beginning respiration. Their gums will turn blue from a lack of oxygen. Here are the steps to follow:

- Make sure the airway is clear. Open his/her mouth and look for a foreign object. If there is a blockage, grab his/her tongue and pull it out. This can sometimes dislodge the object. If you can see it, you can try to pull it out with your fingers or tongs. If this does not work try the Heimlich maneuver which is described later in this report.
- Turn a large dog on his/her side; you can cradle a small pet in your lap.
- Straighten his/her neck so that the throat offers a direct path to the lungs by lifting the chin.
- You will not be able to perform mouth to mouth on a dog. You will not be able to seal their lips with your mouth so air will escape. Instead, use your hand (or both) to hold his/her mouth closed and seal their lips.
- Put your mouth over your pet's nose, with a small dog or cat you will cover both the nose and mouth. Blow 2 quick breaths and watch to see if the lungs expand.
- Blow just hard enough to make his sides expand. With large dogs you will have to blow fairly hard. Be gentle with small dogs and cats or you could rupture their lungs.
- Let the air escape naturally between breaths.
- For dogs less than 30 pounds give 20 to 30 breaths per minute.
- For dogs over 30 pounds give 20 breaths per minute.

It is not unusual for pets to survive after their owner breaths for them for a half hour or more.

CPR

CPR will help move blood through your pet's body if his/her heart has stopped beating. It will work best if you have two people, one to do the chest compressions and the other to perform the rescue breathing. Before attempting CPR make sure your pet's heart has stopped. A quick way to do this is to pinch them between their toes or tap their eyelid. If they do not blink or flinch you should start CPR immediately.

CPR is best performed on a hard, flat surface. Chest compressions will not be as effective on a soft surface. There are several CPR techniques for pets and you should choose your method based upon the animal's size.

Cardiac Pump Technique

This technique works for small dogs, less than 20 pounds, and cats. It calls for compressions directly over the heart to squeeze it and pump blood.

1. Find the heart by flexing your pet's foreleg backward until the elbow crosses the chest. Their heart is directly below that point.
2. Use a flat, firm surface and place your pet on their side.
3. Cup your hand over the chest just behind the elbows; this is the spot you located in step 1.
4. Squeeze firmly and press in about ½ inch. Your thumb will be on one side and your fingers on the other.
5. You can use this technique on puppies and kittens. Cradle them in your palm and use your thumb and fingers.
6. Squeeze rhythmically targeting 80 to 100 compressions per minute. This is a little more than 1 squeeze per second. Perform 5 compressions per breath.

Thoracic Pump Technique

Dogs over 20 pounds have stronger bones and more space between the rib cage and heart. Trying to compress with just your hand won't work very well on these dogs. Vets recommend using the "Thoracic Pump Technique" which places the compressions at the highest part of the chest. This will change the pressure in chest most. It is the changes in the pressure, increasing vs. decreasing, that pushes the blood through the body.

1. Place the pet on its right side.
2. Kneel next to the pet with its back next to your knees.
3. Lean forward, lock your elbows and cup your hands one on top of the other; remember the reference point where the dog's elbow crosses the chest.
4. Compress the chest 2 to 3 inches at a rate of 1 to 2 compressions per second. Perform 5 compressions per breath.
5. For dogs over 100 pounds, 1 compression per second, 10 compressions per breath.

For barrel-chested breeds like bulldogs and pugs, CPR is best performed with the animal on its back. If you have trouble with the dog rolling around, put them back on their side.

After about a minute of performing CPR stop and check for a heartbeat. If the heart is still not beating restart and continue until reaching your vet. Unfortunately, after about 20 minutes there is little chance of reviving a pet.

Heimlich Maneuver

Dogs naturally use their mouths to pick up just about anything they find. It doesn't take much for an object to become lodged in the throat and block the airway. Many people can confuse difficulty breathing with choking. Some of the symptoms of choking are pawing at the face and the throat, acting frantic, trying to cough and having difficulty breathing. Some may salivate excessively. If your dog is choking, you need to help clear the blockage.

1. First, pry open their mouth and look for the object. If you can see it, reach in and try to dislodge it. Don't reach for it if you can't see it. Dogs have small bones that support their tongues which could be mistaken for a foreign object.
2. You can also pick small dogs up by the hind legs, with their head hanging down. With large dogs, lift the back legs. Gravity may help dislodge the object.
3. If those do not work, try a few sharp blows between the shoulder blades with the palm of your hand.
4. Finally, you can try a modified Heimlich Maneuver.

The Heimlich maneuver in dogs is very similar to the maneuver in humans.

1. Pick your dog up with their back to your torso.
2. Make a fist and place it just behind the ribs with your other hand covering your fist.
3. Compress your dogs abdomen with 3 to 5 quick pushes.
4. Check to see if the object is dislodged.
5. If you have a large dog, leave them laying on their side, kneel behind them with their back to your knees. Lean over his body and place your right fist just below his rib cage. Press inward and upward toward the head with quick thrusts.

You can repeat this process one or two times. Be prepared to administer rescue breathing or CPR and take your pet to the Vet immediately. A visit to the vet is recommended even if you do dislodge the object. There may be internal injuries.

Cleaning wounds

With any wound, the first step in first aid is to stop the bleeding. Applying pressure is the quickest way to do this. First check to see that there is no debris in the wound that would cause further damage. For minor wounds, use a piece of gauze or clean piece of cloth and apply pressure directly to over the wound. If the gauze becomes saturated, apply a fresh piece over the saturated piece. Do not remove or lift up the old piece. Lifting it will disturb the clotting process. Continue to add gauze as necessary until the bleeding stops.

Severe bleeding may require applying pressure to the artery instead of the wound. Dogs and cats have three major pressure points; the upper inside of the front leg, the upper inside of the rear leg and the underside of the tail. Applying pressure at these points will slow bleeding on the extremities. Don't

worry about a tourniquet, this can cut off the blood supply and leaving one on too long can result in the loss of a limb.

Whenever the skin has been broken, it is very easy for dirt, bacteria and even fur to get into the wound and cause infection. If the wound has bled heavily you will not need to clean it. Bleeding has a cleansing effect that flushes out contaminants and further cleansing on your part may restart the bleeding. For a wound that is not bleeding, cleansing will help protect your dog from additional harm.

First, you will need to trim the fur around the wound to prevent it from sticking to the injured area. On broken skin, also cover the wound with a water-soluble lubricant like K-Y jelly. This will keep the trimmed hair out of the wound and will wash away easily. Use blunt scissors or electric clippers to trim an area about an inch around the injury. Trimming the hair helps keep the wound clean and may even help healing.

Next, gently flush the wound with cool water or a sterile saline solution. Remember the area is likely to be tender so try to use something like a garden hose, sink sprayer attachment or a squeeze bottle. If you use a contact lens solution, make sure it is a saline solution only. Other types of solutions can burn.

Finally, disinfect the wound with a non-stinging antiseptic. You can use a solution like Betadine Solution. Dilute it with distilled water until it is the color of weak tea, put in a sprayer and spray the area thoroughly. Gently pat it dry with gauze or clean lint-free cloths.

Bandaging

In first aid, a bandage is often applied temporarily to provide wound protection until you are able to reach your vet. Bandaging wounds serves several purposes:

- It keeps the wound dry
- It helps prevent contamination
- It promotes healing by absorbing seepage
- It helps control bleeding with gentle pressure
- Bandages also keeps your pet from chewing and licking the injury
- In some cases, you may also want to use an "Elizabethan Collar" to prevent licking and chewing.

All bandages need to be kept clean and dry. They should also be changed every day or two. Make sure bandages are not too tight. A good test for fit is similar to collars; you should be able to slip one or two fingers underneath the bandage easily.

All bandages have three parts:

1. An absorbent pad – Sterile non-stick gauze pads work best. You can use any absorbent material that is clean and lint-free. Paper products, like napkins and paper towels, typically stick to wound and can be hard to remove. If that is all you have available, apply a small amount of K-Y jelly to the wound first. It is easy to clean off and will keep the pad from sticking.

2. Gauze – Roll gauze wraps over the pad and holds it in place. Try to overlap at least one third of the gauze with each successive wrap. If you don't have roll gauze, you can use the leg from panty hose or any elastic material to hold the pad in place.
3. Tape – For pets, an elastic adhesive bandage works best to secure the gauze in place but any tape will work. Make sure the tape covers part of your pet's fur on both ends of the bandage. This will help it stay in place and keep your pet from removing it. In a pinch, you can also use Saran Wrap. It sticks to itself and won't stick to fur. In fact, your pet may actually tolerate it better.

Remember not to bandage too tightly. If you see swelling above or below the bandage, it is too tight. You should be able to slip two fingers between the bandage and your pet's skin.

Now that you know what makes up a good bandage, there are several special techniques for bandaging pets.

Paws

Place your pet's wounded paw on top of a gauze pad with the gauze covering the wound. Cut a length of roll gauze and fold it in half lengthwise. Place this over the gauze pad starting at the top of the paw and moving down over and then back under the toes stopping after covering the paw pad. Next, using single ply roll gauze, wrap around the paw starting at the toes moving up the leg until you have covered the folded gauze. Overlap each layer slightly and use even pressure. Secure at the top with tape. Since pets sweat through their paw pads, allow the bandage to breathe by using the tape only at the top edge. For extra protection, slip a cotton sock over the bandage and secure this with tape at the top edge. Remember to tape to the fur.

Legs

Bandaging legs is very similar to paws. Place the pad over the wound and wrap with roll gauze. Tape the bandage to their fur at both ends. Slip a cotton athletic sock over the whole bandage and secure with tape. The sock will keep your pet from chewing the bandage.

Neck

Place a pad over the injury and wrap loosely with roll gauze. This type of bandage should not be so tight that it restricts their breathing. Secure with tape at both ends, again making sure the bandage does not interfere with breathing.

Chest, Shoulders, Hips and Flanks

You will use the same basic techniques for injuries to the hips, flanks, chest and shoulders. As always start by placing a pad over the wound. Wrap gauze over the pad using a figure 8 pattern around the chest or abdomen and alternating in front and back of the leg. To provide additional protection you can put a T-shirt on your dog for chest and shoulder injuries. Secure the hem of the t-shirt with tape around your pet's abdomen. For hip and flank injuries, you can use a clean pair of men's underwear. Pull them over your dog's legs so the tail sticks out through the fly. Secure the waistband around your pet's abdomen with tape.

Tail

Bandage a tail like you would a leg, an absorbent pad over the wound and wrapped with gauze. Slip a cotton tube sock over the tail. Cover at least two-thirds of the tail with the sock. Wrap with tape starting at the tip of the tail and work toward the body in a diagonal pattern. Run the tape 2 inches beyond the end of the sock onto the fur. Move back down the tail with the tape, again moving in a diagonal pattern. When you are done, it will look sort of like a mummy. This wrapping technique is very hard for your pet to pull off.

Ears

Regardless of whether one or both ears are injured, it is best to bandage the whole head with these types of injuries. Place a gauze pad over the injury and lay your dog's ear flap up on top of his head. Fold his other ear flap on top of the first one. Wrap roll gauze around the head and under the neck to hold the ears in place then secure with tape. Your dog will look like he is wearing a head scarf when you are finished. If you don't have any gauze, you can cut the toe off a sock or the sleeve off of a cotton t-shirt and slip this over their heads. Make sure to tape the outside edges to your pet's fur so they can't push it off.

Body Bandages

The most challenging types of wounds to bandage are wounds to the sides, back or belly. In these instances there are several techniques that you can use.

- Slip a t-shirt on your pet and tape the waist around your pet's abdomen.
- Take a rectangular sheet of cloth and cut an equal number of slits on opposite sides of the fabric. Wrap the fabric around your pet's torso and use the slits to tie the fabric on top or your pet's back.
- Try making a body wrap. Place an old towel or sheet on the floor and have your pet stand on it. Mark the position of each of their feet and remove your pet from the fabric. You will cut holes for the legs where those marks are. Slide your pet's legs through these holes and bring the edges of the fabric up over the back. Secure the fabric with safety pins.

Splints

If you believe your pet's leg has been broken, use a splint to stabilize and protect the injured limb. To be effective, the joints above and below the suspected break should be immobilized. For this reason, it is difficult to split the upper part of the leg.

The splint should cover the entire leg. To make one, use any rigid material such as cardboard, rolled up newspaper or even a towel that has been folded up. You can roll several sheets of newspaper into a fairly tight roll and slip it over your pet's leg. One of the best materials to use is bubble wrap. Just place the leg on the material, wrap it around the leg and tape from the toe working toward the body.

You can also make a "Robert Jones" bandage using a roll of thick first aid cotton. Wrap as much of the cotton around the leg as you can then wrap an ace or elastic bandage over the top of it. You can't use tape on this type of bandage. It won't stick to the cotton.

A DOG OWNER'S GUIDE TO FIRST AID

Remember that splints are only temporary measures to protect the injury while transporting your pet. You should immediately take your pet to the vet if you suspect a broken bone.

Transport

Take care when moving an injured pet to avoid making the injury worse or causing more pain. You really shouldn't carry him/her in your arms. It is very difficult to keep your pet still. You can jostle your pet just by breathing. In addition, they can pick up on your emotional distress which can cause them additional stress. Remember these basic guidelines:

- Support broken limbs
- Support the back
- If there is a lung injury, keep your pet laying with the injured lung down. Keeping the uninjured lung up will aid in breathing
- Allow your pet to find the position that is most comfortable for him/her.

If your pet need assistance in getting to the car or into the vet's office you can try the following methods.

Pet Carrier

Using a carrier for small dogs and cats is an excellent method. The carrier should be just large enough to house them comfortably.

Rigid Surface

Use this method any time a back injury is suspected. Put a board on the ground just behind your pet. Slide your pet back first onto any rigid surface with one hand beneath the shoulder while the other hand is beneath the hips. For cats and smalls dogs you can use a cookie sheet, trash can lid, cutting board or even a large book. Larger dogs can be placed on an ironing board or sheet of plywood. Just make sure that it will fit into your car.

Cover your pet with an old towel, blanket or any piece of material that covers their body. Tie or tape them to the board. Run the tape behind the front legs and in front of the back legs. This will keep them from sliding off the board. Bigger dogs will probably need two people to carry the board to the car.

Stretcher

If you can't find a board big enough just put your dog on a blanket or towel and have two people lift it from each end.

Vital Signs

You should know what is normal for your pet so you can tell when something is wrong. Following are the key indicators of your pet's health.

Temperature

Dogs and cats normally have a higher body temperature than humans. Normal for your dog is 101 degrees Fahrenheit, 102 for cats. A temperature over 103.5 is considered a fever. You will need rectal thermometer to take your pet's temperature; there really isn't any other method. This is also much easier if you have another person to help by restraining your pet.

- First shake the mercury in the thermometer down to about 96 degrees.
- Lubricate the tip of a bulb thermometer with K-Y Jelly. You can use petroleum jelly, K-Y or mineral oil on digital thermometers.
- Grab your pet's tail and lift it up. Insert the thermometer about halfway and wait three minutes. Keep a firm grip on the tail during this time. You do not want your pet to sit or escape.
- Remove the thermometer after three minutes and read the temperature. Be sure to clean the thermometer with rubbing alcohol after use.

The thermometer should be fairly clean when it is removed. Blood, diarrhea or black, tarry stools indicate an abnormality and you should contact your vet.

If your dog does have a fever, keep them well hydrated. You can also add some pedialyte to replace minerals that can become depleted during a fever. Some pets prefer beef or chicken broth or the water from a can of tuna. Use whatever works, as long as you get them to drink. If you are having trouble, you can try using an eyedropper or turkey baster and squirt water into the side of their mouth. Call your vet if your pet's fever lasts longer than 24 hours.

A temperature below 99 degrees indicates hypothermia. You should warm your pet and take them to your vet.

Heart rate

You should be able to take your pet's pulse. The easiest place to locate his/her pulse is on the femoral artery located in the groin. You can find it by putting your fingers on the inside of his/her hind leg, then slide your hand upward until the backs of your fingers rest against the abdomen. Move your fingers back and forth on the inside of the leg until you feel a pulse. You can also place your hand on his/her chest near the left elbow to feel for the heart beat. To calculate beats per minute (bpm), simply count the number for 15 seconds and multiply by 4. Your pet's pulse should be strong, regular and easy to find.

Become familiar with the rate that is normal for your pet. Take their pulse three or four times in 15 second bursts. Do this while they are relaxed and not right after they have chased that squirrel out of the yard. This will give you a reasonable average. Be aware that a dog's heartbeat will normally slow down and speed up with each breath. This is not abnormal and does not require veterinary care.

Normal resting rates are:

- Large dogs (over 30 pounds): 60 - 120 beats per minute
- Small dogs and puppies: 120 - 160 beats per minute

A DOG OWNER'S GUIDE TO FIRST AID

- Cats: 160 - 220 beats per minute
- Kittens: 200 – 300 beats per minute

If his/her pulse is too fast, too slow or erratic, it means something is wrong and you should get to your vet immediately.

Respiration rate

Normally, dogs take about 10 to 30 breathes per minute but they can pant up to 200 breaths per minute if they have been exercising or are hot. The following symptoms require medical attention:

- Increased respiratory rate – This is the first sign of distress. Get to your vet if this starts worsening.
- Excessive panting or gasping – your dog will stand with their elbows outward, cats will sit with crouched with their head and neck extended. This is a sign of early respiratory failure.
- Labored, open-mouth breathing, blue gums – indicates pulmonary failure and lack of oxygen
- Slowed, shallow breathing, stopped breathing – indicates respiratory collapse, prepare to administer rescue breathing.

Cats do pant in order to cool off like dogs do. If your cat is breathing with his/her mouth open or panting, call your vet immediately.

Skin and gum color

Because of the fur on your pet's body, it can be difficult to assess a pet's skin tone. Vets typically use the mucous membranes, like their gums, in order to gauge a pet's health. Your pet's gums should be a nice pink color. Some animals have pigmented gums so look for a spot that does not have pigment to check gum color. Here is a brief reference on what skin color indicates:

- Pink - normal
- Pale to white - Anemia or shock
- Blue - lack of oxygen, suffocation, smoke inhalation
- Bright cherry red - heatstroke or carbon monoxide poisoning
- Yellow - liver problems

If you notice any color other than pink, see your vet right away.

Capillary Refill

This simple test will help you judge the circulation in your pet. Capillaries are tiny blood vessels that lie near the surface of the skin. They are easy to see in your pet's gums just above their teeth.

Lift your pet's upper lip and press your fingertip against the gum tissue. (You should do this on an area that has no pigment.) You will be squeezing blood out of that spot. Pull your finger away and you will see a white spot where your finger was. Time how long it takes for the spot to turn pink again. Below is a quick reference on capillary refill time:

A DOG OWNER'S GUIDE TO FIRST AID

- 1-2 seconds – normal
- 2-4 seconds – indicates possible dehydration or shock
- More than 4 seconds – severe problems, indicates dehydration or shock --- seek medical attention
- Less than 1 second – severe problems, shock or heatstroke --- seek medical attention

Dehydration Test

It is very important for your pet to remain hydrated, and he/she can easily become dehydrated due to vomiting, diarrhea, overheating or just not getting enough to drink. It is very easy to tell if your pet is dehydrated. Your pet has loose skin at the back of the neck, called the scruff, which can be easily grasped and pulled up. When your dog is hydrated, the scruff of their neck should snap back into place when released. If the skin returns to place slowly, your dog is dehydrated. If the dehydration is severe, the scruff will stand up like a ridge when released. Prevent dehydration by keeping plenty of water available. Leave two bowls readily available in case one is knocked over.

If your dog does become dehydrated here are some tips:

- Give your dog water but don't let them guzzle it. Drinking too rapidly can cause vomiting and make the dehydration worse.
- Try giving a fluid with electrolytes, such as Pedialyte. Your pet can lose minerals when dehydrated, and this can help replace them.
- If they seem reluctant to drink, try Gatorade, beef or chicken broth or even the water from the can of tuna. Flavors can tempt your pet.
- Check his/her mouth. Perhaps they have gotten a burr that is causing pain and preventing him/her from drinking.
- Give your pet ice cubes. If he/she has gone without water for too long and is having trouble keeping it down, ice cubes can help.
- If all else fails, you can use an eye dropper or turkey baster and squirt water into the side of the mouth.

You should see your vet if your dog has become dehydrated.

Responsiveness

When your dog is healthy, she should be alert and responsive. The following are brief descriptions of behavior that will require you to contact your vet:

Symptom¹	Problem	What to do
Depressed; sleepy, reluctant to move, slow to respond to stimulation	Common to many illnesses	Call your vet if condition persists for more than 24 hours
Disoriented; walks unsteadily or bumps into objects, falls over to one side, stares blindly, walks in a circle	Possible inner ear or neurologic problem	See your vet the same day
Stupor; only response is to deep pain stimulation like pinching their toes	Neurologic or metabolic problem	See your vet immediately
Comatose or experiencing seizures	Severe neurologic problem, injury, disease or toxin	Emergency, see your vet immediately

Triage – Top 10 Priorities

If your pet is injured you must be able to prioritize those injuries and symptoms for treatment. Treat the following conditions before treating anything else.

1. No breathing or pulse
 - treat with CPR and rescue breathing
2. No breathing with pulse
 - treat with rescue breathing
3. Loss of consciousness
 - Remove collar, check for breathing and pulse, elevate the head, watch for vomiting and keep them as still as possible
4. Shock; indicated by pale gums, rapid breathing, weak, rapid pulse and cold skin
 - Stop any bleeding, stabilize the body, wrap in a blanket to keep warm, rub a little honey or Karo syrup on their gums. Pets in shock can have low blood sugar levels and this will help raise those levels.
5. Difficulty breathing
6. Chest puncture or gaping wound
 - Control bleeding, treat for shock

¹ Shojai, Amy D. The First-Aid Companion for Dogs & Cats. St. Martin's Press: Rodale Inc., 2001.

7. Severe bleeding
 - See section on wound care
8. Abdominal puncture or gaping wound
 - Treat for shock, apply pressure to control bleeding, clean and protect the wound, numb with ice for pain, transport on a rigid surface
9. Extremes of body temperature
 - For heat stroke cool him/her off with a hose, in the shower or tub. Transport your pet to the vet when temperature is below 106 degrees, use an ice pack or cold cloth on the pack of the neck, let them have water, watch for shock
 - For hypothermia (body temp 90 degrees or less), get to your vet as soon as possible. Do not try to use heating pads or hot water bottles. Your pet will need to be warmed up from the inside out and your vet is trained to do that. Wrap in a blanket and transport. For moderate hypothermia (body temp 90-95 degrees), wrap hot water bottles in towels and apply them to the sides of the neck and where the legs meet the torso. Keep two or three layers of towel between your pet and the hot water bottle. Once his temperature reaches 99 degrees take him to your vet. For mild hypothermia (95-99 degrees), take your pet inside and turn up the thermostat, wrap them in a blanket, feed them warm liquids and keep him dry. Take his temperature every 10 to 15 minutes until their temperature is back to 99 degrees. If their temperature does not increase within 30 to 45 minutes, get to your vet.
10. Poisoning
 - Watch for signs of shock and contact either your vet or the poison control center at the ASPCA, 888-426-4435. There is a \$65 consultation fee for calling this number. Follow their instructions for immediate assistance and go to your vet or local emergency clinic.

Pet First Aid Kit

You should have a first aid kit for your pets just like you do for humans. You can buy one from a pet supply store or create your own. A well stocked first aid kit should contain:

- Card with your Vet's phone number and poison control center phone number
- Card containing your pet's baseline vital stats (temp, heart rate, weight etc.)
- Muzzle or material to make one
- Gauze pads in different sizes
- Rolls of stretchable and non-stretchable gauze, 1 to 2 inches wide
- Elastic or Ace bandage
- Saran wrap
- Bandage tape
- Heavy Tape to strap your pet to a rigid surface for transport
- Blunt tipped tweezers and needle nose pliers (to remove splinters and foreign objects)
- Blunt tipped scissors (or electric clippers) to trim hair near wounds
- Bubble wrap – for splints

A DOG OWNER'S GUIDE TO FIRST AID

- Clean towel or blanket
- Cold packs and hot packs or washcloth and hot water bottle
- Rectal Thermometer
- Large syringe (no needle) or eyedropper depending on size of pet to give liquid medicine
- Antiseptic liquid soap (Betadine)
- Antiseptic Solution
- Cotton Balls
- K-Y Jelly or other lubricant
- Sterile Saline Solution
- Honey
- Antibiotic ointment
- 3% hydrogen peroxide
- Activated Charcoal preparation
- Styptic powder like Kwik Stop

Human Medications²

Some over-the-counter human medicines can also help your pet. The dosage, however, will be much smaller and is generally based on weight. You should always discuss any medication you consider with your vet first. If in doubt, don't use it.

Medication	Usage	Dosage for Dogs	Dosage for Cats
A&D Ointment	Antibacterial ointment for wounds and scrapes	Thin coating 3 or 4 times per day for 7 to 10 days	Thin coating 3 or 4 times per day for 7 to 10 days
Aveeno Oatmeal Medicated Bath	Soothes itchy skin	Baths as often as 3 times a week	Baths as often as 3 times a week
Benadryl	Antihistamine	1 mg per pound every 6 to 8 hours	1 mg per pound every 6 to 8 hours
Betadine Skin Cleanser	Antiseptic soap for cleaning wounds	Use full strength	Use full strength
Betadine Solution	Antiseptic for flushing wounds	Dilute to the color of weak tea and apply	Dilute to the color of weak tea and apply
Buffered Aspirin	Pain Reliever	10 to 25 mg per 2.2 pounds, 2 or 3 times a day	DO NOT USE
Caladryl	Soothing lotion for itching and pain	Apply to cotton ball and dab on area	Apply to cotton ball and dab on area

² Walczak, Lynnette. N.d. *Acceptable household Medications for Pets*. Retrived from <http://dogs.thefuntimesguide.com>.

A DOG OWNER'S GUIDE TO FIRST AID

Medication	Usage	Dosage for Dogs	Dosage for Cats
Cortaid	Anti-itch	Apply to the affected area 1 to 2 times a day	Apply to the affected area 1 to 2 times a day
Desitin	Soothing ointment	Rub on sore area	Rub on sore area
DiGel liquid	Anti-gas, antacid	Up to 4 tbsp every 8 hours	Up to 2 tbsp every 8 hours
Dramamine	Nausea, motion sickness	2-4 mg per pound up to 3 times a day	12.5 mg once a day
Epson Salts	Soak for itchy or irritated skin	1 cup per gallon of water	½ cup per gallon of water
Gatorade	Dehydration	Mix 50/50 with water, as much as they want	Mix 50/50 with water, as much as they want
Hydrogen Peroxide 3%	To induce vomiting after accidental ingestion of poison	10ml by mouth every 15 minutes	10ml by mouth every 15 minutes
Hypo tears	Eye lubricant	4-12 times a day	4-12 times a day
Iodine	Topical antiseptic	Paint on wound	Paint on wound
Kaopectate	Diarrhea	½ to 1 tsp per 5 pounds every 8 hours. Max dosage 2 Tablespoons	½ to 1 tsp per 5 pounds every 4-8 hours, one day only
Lanacane	Topical Anesthetic	Apply to area with gauze pad	DO NOT USE
Massengill Disposable Douche	Odor Neutralizer (good for skunk spray)	2 oz per gallon of water, soak for 15 minutes then bathe	2 oz per gallon of water, soak for 15 minutes then bathe
Metamucil, no flavor	Constipation	1 tsp per 10 to 25 pounds, mix in food	½ to 1 tsp, mixed in food
Mylanta Liquid	Upset stomach, gas	Under 15 lbs, 3 tbsp 16 – 50 lbs, 4 tbsp Over 51 lbs, 6 tbsp	DO NOT USE
Neosporin	Wound care, prevent infection	Apply 3 or 4 times per day as needed	Apply 3 or 4 times per day as needed
Pedialyte	Dehydration	Mix 50/50 with water, as much as they want	Mix 50/50 with water, as much as they want
Pepcid AC	Vomiting	5 mg per 10 lbs, 1 or 2 times per day	5 mg per 10 lbs, 1 or 2 times per day
Pepto-Bismol	Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting	½ to 1 tsp per 5 lbs to a maximum of 2 Tbsp; up to 3 times a day OR 1 tablet per 15 lbs up to 3 times a day.	DO NOT USE
Phillips Milk of Magnesia	Constipation	2 to 4 tsp per 5 lbs every 6 hours	½ - 1 tsp once per day
Preparation H	Sore anal area	Apply up to 4 times per day	DO NOT USE

A DOG OWNER'S GUIDE TO FIRST AID

Medication	Usage	Dosage for Dogs	Dosage for Cats
Solarcaine	Topical pain reliever and anesthetic	Apply to sore area 1 or 2 times a day for up to 2 days	DO NOT USE
Vick VapoRub	Congestion	Smear a small amount on chin	Smear a small amount on chin
Witch Hazel	Astringent, antiseptic	Dab on affected area	Dab on affected area

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3. *Basic Wound Care to Start the Healing Process*, retrieved from <http://www.Dog-First-Aid-101.com>, March 24, 2010.
4. PetPlace Veterinarians, n.d., *Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation in Dogs(CPR)*, retrieved from <http://www.petplace.com>.
5. N.d. *Heat Stroke in Dogs*. retrieved from <http://www.petmd.com>.
6. Walczak, Lynnette. N.d. *Acceptable household Medications for Pets*. Retrieved from <http://dogs.thefuntimesguide.com>.