



Pet First Aid Basic Procedures

Emergency treatment and first aid for pets should never be used as a substitute for veterinary care. But it may save your pet's life before you can get your pet to a veterinarian.

Poisoning and Exposure to Toxins

Poisoning is a pet emergency that causes a great deal of confusion for pet owners. In general, any products that are harmful for people are also harmful for pets. Examples include cleaning products, rodent poisons and antifreeze. But you also need to be aware of common food items that may be harmful to your pet. The AVMA brochure [Household Hazards](#) offers a summary of what foods and common household items may pose a danger to your pet. Additional information and examples can be found on the other Web sites listed in this section.

If your pet's skin or eyes are exposed to a toxic product (such as many cleaning products), check the product label for the instructions for people exposed to the product; if the label instructs you to wash your hands with soap and water if you're exposed, then wash your pet's skin with soap and water (don't get any into its eyes, mouth or nose). If the label tells you to flush the skin or eyes with water, do this for your pet as soon as possible (if you can do it safely), and call a veterinarian immediately.

If you know your pet has consumed something that may be harmful, or if the animal is having seizures, losing consciousness, is unconscious or is having difficulty breathing, telephone your veterinarian, emergency



veterinary clinic or the [Animal Poison Control Center](#) hotline (888.426.4435– available 365 days/year, 24 hours/day) immediately. There is a fee for the consultation.

If possible, have the following information available:

- Species, breed, age, sex, weight and number of animals involved
- Symptoms
- Name/description of the substance that is in question; the amount the animal was exposed to; and the length of time of the exposure (how long it's been since your pet ate it or was exposed to it).
- Have the product container/packaging available for reference.

Collect any material your pet may have vomited or chewed, and place it in a plastic sealable bag to take with you when you bring your animal in for veterinary treatment.

Additional Information on Animal Poisoning:

The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA) offers additional information and resources:

- [Animal Poison Control Center](#)

Another resource is [Killer Grapes and Other Concerns in Animal Poison Control](#), available on the University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine's Web site

TOP 10 TOXINS OF 2021

Each year the ASPCA® Animal Poison Control Center (APCC) compiles its data and releases the top 10 categories of toxins that pets encounter each year. The APCC received calls about 320,350 items that pets were exposed to in 2021.

1 OVER-THE-COUNTER (OTC) MEDICATIONS

Most common were ibuprofen, vitamin D and herbal supplements.



2 HUMAN PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS

Including antidepressants, cardiac medications and ADHD meds.



3 FOOD

Most common were protein bars and shakes, xylitol, onions/garlic and grapes/raisins.



4 CHOCOLATE

We received over 103 cases a day – that's more than one case every 15 minutes!



5 PLANTS

Made up 9.8% of calls as gardening remained a popular hobby this year.



6 HOUSEHOLD TOXINS

Cleaning products and paint made up 8.3% of all calls.



7 VETERINARY PRODUCTS

Chewable products, such as joint and calming chews, are tasty for pets.



8 RODENTICIDES

Rodenticides can either cause bleeding, seizures or kidney failure depending on the type ingested.



9 INSECTICIDES

Safer alternatives for flea, tick, and indoor insect control continue to cause this number to decrease.



10 GARDEN PRODUCTS

Dogs love to eat organic fertilizers (bone meal, blood meal, feather meal).



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Animal Poison Control Center

1	Chocolate	12.8%
2	Bromethalin	5.7%
3	Xylitol	5.4%
4	Grapes and Raisins	4.5%
5	Antidepressant and Antianxiety medications	4.3%
6	Ibuprofen	3.9%
7	Anticoagulant Rodenticides	3.2%
8	Vitamin D3 supplement	2.3%
9	Marijuana	1.9%
10	Carpfen	1.6%
11	Amphetamine combos and Methylphenidate	1.6%
12	Beta-blockers	1.4%
13	Acetaminophen	1.3%
14	Allergy medications	1.1%
15	Thyroid hormone medication	1.1%
16	Cholecalciferol rodenticide	1.1%
17	Onions (Allium species)	1.1%
18	Melatonin	1.0%
19	Lisinopril (Zestril)	0.9%
20	Albuterol	0.8%

Patients

Poison Control for Dogs and Cats

People Food

Safe*

- Apples
- Bananas
- Blueberries
- Bread
- Broccoli (cooked)
- Cantaloupe
- Carrots (cooked)
- Chicken and turkey (cooked)
- Eggs (cooked)
- Green beans (cooked)
- Milk/cheese (if pet is not lactose intolerant)
- Oatmeal (cooked)
- Peas (cooked)
- Pumpkin (cooked)
- Salmon (cooked)



Unsafe

- Alcohol
- Avocado
- Chocolate, coffee and caffeine
- Citrus
- Coconut water
- Grapes and raisins
- Macadamia nuts
- Milk/cheese (if pet is lactose intolerant)
- Nuts
- Onions, garlic and chives
- Raw/undercooked meat, eggs and bones
- Raw yeast dough
- Salt and salty snack foods
- Xylitol

Common Houseplants

Safe

- African violet
- Air plant
- Bamboo
- Boston fern
- Cast iron plant
- Christmas cactus
- Haworthia
- Herbs (basil, sage, thyme)
- Palms (NOT sago palm)
- Phalaenopsis orchids
- Spider plant
- Wax plant



- Aloe vera
- Asparagus fern
- Corn plant
- Cyclamen
- Dieffenbachia
- Elephant ear
- English ivy
- Herbs (lavender, oregano)
- Jade
- Lilies
- Philodendron
- Sago palm

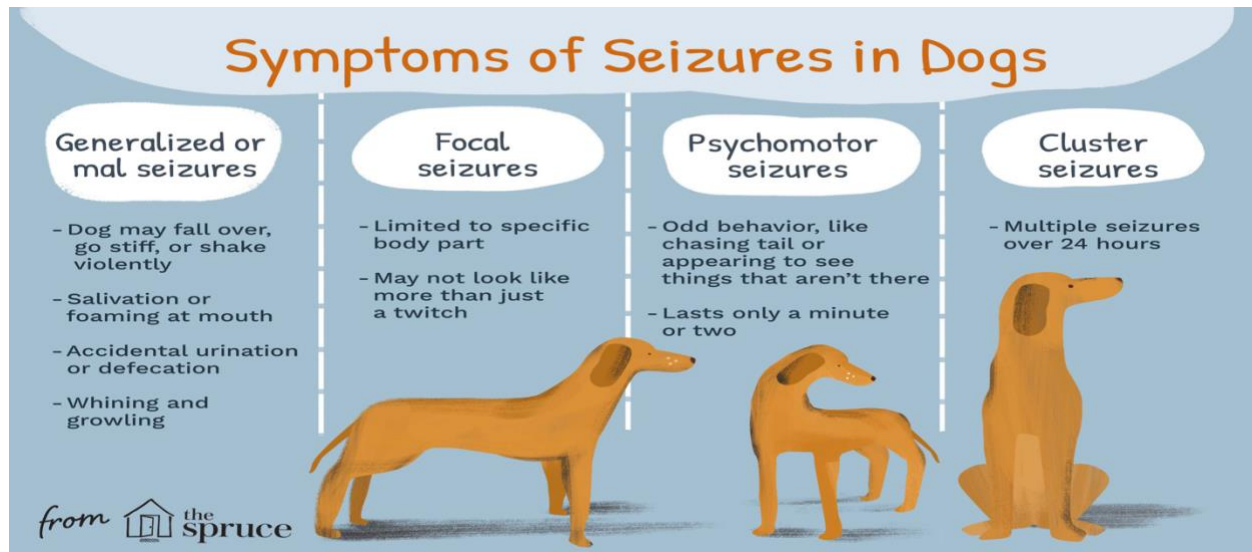
ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: (888) 426-4435

*Although these foods are safe for dogs & cats, please only offer as an occasional snack & in moderation.

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Seizures

- Keep your pet away from any objects (including furniture) that might hurt it. Do not try to restrain the pet.
- Time the seizure (they usually last 2-3 minutes).
- After the seizure has stopped, keep your pet as warm and quiet as possible and contact your veterinarian.



Fractures

- Muzzle your pet.
- Gently lay your pet on a flat surface for support.
- While transporting your injured pet to a veterinarian, use a stretcher (you can use a board or other firm surface as a stretcher, or use a throw rug or blanket as a sling). If possible, secure the pet to the stretcher (make sure you don't put pressure on the injured area or the animal's chest) for transport—this may be as simple as wrapping a blanket around them.
- You can attempt to set the fracture with a homemade splint, but remember that a badly-placed splint may cause more harm than good. If in doubt, it is always best to leave the bandaging and splinting to a veterinarian.

Bleeding (external)

- Muzzle your pet.
- Press a clean, thick gauze pad over the wound, and keep pressure over the wound with your hand until the blood starts clotting. This will often take several minutes for the clot to be strong enough to stop the bleeding. Instead of checking it every few seconds to see if it has clotted, hold pressure on it for a minimum of 3 minutes and then check it.
- If bleeding is severe and on the legs, apply a tourniquet (using an elastic band or gauze) between the wound and the body, and apply a bandage and pressure over the wound. Loosen the tourniquet for 20 seconds every 15-20 minutes. Severe bleeding can quickly be life-threatening—get your animal to a veterinarian immediately if this occurs.



Bleeding (internal)

- Symptoms: bleeding from nose, mouth, rectum, coughing up blood, blood in urine, pale gums, collapse, weak and rapid pulse.
- Keep animal as warm and quiet as possible and transport immediately to a veterinarian.

Burns

- Chemical
 - Muzzle the animal.
 - Flush burn immediately with large quantities of water.
- Severe
 - Muzzle the animal.
 - Quickly apply ice water compress to burned area.

Heatstroke

- Never leave your pet in the car on warm days. The temperature inside a car can rise very quickly to dangerous levels, even on milder days. Pets can succumb to heatstroke very easily and must be treated very quickly to give them the best chance of survival.
- If you cannot immediately get your pet to a veterinarian, move it to a shaded area and out of direct sunlight.
- Place a cool or cold, wet towel around its neck and head (do not cover your pet's eyes, nose or mouth).
- Remove the towel, wring it out, and rewet it and rewrap it every few minutes as you cool the animal.

- Pour or use a hose to keep water running over the animal's body (especially the abdomen and between the hind legs), and use your hands to massage its legs and sweep the water away as it absorbs the body heat.
- Transport the pet to a veterinarian as soon as possible.



Heat Stroke

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Dogs and cats can't perspire and can only dispel heat by panting and through the pads of their feet. If you suspect heat stroke in your pet, seek veterinary attention immediately.

Signs of heat stroke include (but are not limited to):

- Body temperatures of 104-110°F degrees
- Excessive panting
- Dark or bright red tongue and gums
- Sticky or dry tongue and gums
- Staggering
- Stupor
- Seizures
- Bloody diarrhea or vomiting
- Rapid heartbeat

Note: Short-nosed breeds such as Bulldogs, Pugs, etc., large heavy-coated breeds, and dogs with heart or respiratory problems are more at risk for heat stroke.

Cooling Your Pet

- Find some shade. Get your pet out of the heat.
- Use cool water, not ice water, to cool your pet (very cold water will constrict the blood vessels and impede cooling).
- Place cool wet cloths on feet and around head.
- Offer ice cubes for the animal to lick.
- Contact your your veterinarian.

Shock

Symptoms of Shock in Dogs

Dogs in shock may have a history of trauma, surgery, weakness, collapse, vomiting, diarrhea, or decreased water intake.

Signs of shock include:

- Pale or discolored gums
- Weak pulses
- Altered, dull mental state, such as lethargy or confusion
- Decreased body temperature
- Increased and abnormal heart rate
- Difficulty breathing
- Dehydration (presenting as decreased skin elasticity, tacky mucous membranes, sunken eyes)

Stages of Shock in Dogs

The signs of shock continuously change and progress quickly. In the early, or compensated, stage of shock, some animals only show mild clinical signs. This early stage can be difficult to recognize, but as time passes, shock can progress to an intermediate stage, known as early decompensated shock.

In the intermediate stage, the body attempts to conserve blood volume and proper cardiac output by giving vital organs priority in blood distribution. Often, this attempt reduces blood to the other organs, causing them to fail. Without intervention and veterinary treatment, dogs will die once they have reached the intermediate stage.

The late stage of shock, also known as late decompensated or irreversible shock, leads to systemic inflammation, systemic organ failure, and death. Survival after this stage of shock is rare.

How Veterinarians Diagnose Shock in Dogs

Veterinarians may suspect shock based on a physical exam and the dog's history. All types of shock will require similar testing. The common tests include:

- Routine bloodwork, including a complete blood count and biochemistry profile, to look for secondary issues and organ function

- Lactic acid tests that indicate how successfully the blood is being distributed to the body
- Blood gas and oxygen saturation (SpO2) analyses to assess oxygenation status
- Blood pressure evaluation
- Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) to monitor arrhythmias
- Radiographs to assess for internal hemorrhage, wounds, cancer, heart or lung disease
- Coagulation tests to determine a potential cause of shock or the severity of shock
- Checking for cardiac enzymes that may indicate heart muscle injury
- Echocardiography (heart ultrasound) to assess for cardiac dysfunction, valve disease, contractility, and heartworm

Treatment of Shock in Dogs

Regardless of the type of shock, the goals for treating dogs in shock are the same: to minimize the pet's stress as much as possible, to diagnose and treat the underlying disease processes, and to:

- Restore blood volume with intravenous fluids* and blood transfusions if needed
- Stop any ongoing hemorrhage or damage
- Increase tissue oxygenation with supplemental oxygenation
- Correct any cardiac arrhythmias with drugs or surgery
- Prevent (or treat) any potential infection or suspicion of sepsis with broad-spectrum antibiotic therapy
- Prevent and correct any organ failure

*Intravenous fluids are crucial; however, in cardiogenic shock, this treatment could make the situation worse until the underlying condition is corrected

What to do if your pet has no heartbeat

Do not begin chest compressions until you've secured an airway and started rescue breathing (see the section above, [What to do if your pet is not breathing](#)).

- Gently lay your pet on its right side on a firm surface. The heart is located in the lower half of the chest on the left side, just behind the elbow of the front left leg. Place one hand underneath the pet's chest for support and place the other hand over the heart.
- For dogs, press down gently on your pet's heart about one inch for medium-sized dogs; press harder for larger animals and with less force for smaller animals.

- To massage the hearts of cats and other tiny pets, cradle your hand around the animal's chest so your thumb is on the left side of the chest and your fingers are on the right side of the chest, and compress the chest by squeezing it between your thumb and fingers.
- Press down 80-120 times per minute for larger animals and 100-150 times per minute for smaller ones.
- Don't perform rescue breathing and chest compressions at the same exact time; alternate the chest compressions with the rescue breaths, or work as a team with another person so one person performs chest compressions for 4-5 seconds and stops long enough to allow the other person to give one rescue breath.
- Continue until you can hear a heartbeat and your pet is breathing regularly, or you have arrived at the veterinary clinic and they can take over the resuscitation attempts.

Please remember that your pet's likelihood of surviving with resuscitation is very low. However, in an emergency it may give your pet its only chance.

Always remember that any first aid administered to your pet should be followed by immediate veterinary care. First aid care is not a substitute for veterinary care, but it may save your pet's life until it receives veterinary treatment.

Saving Your Pet With CPR

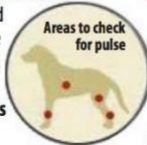
If there is no breathing and no pulse, begin CPR immediately.

1 Check for breathing & pulse
Check for pulse using middle and index finger below wrist, inner thigh, below the ankle or where left elbow touches the chest.

2 Look for other warning signs
• Gums and lips will appear gray
• Pupils will be dilated

3 If no pulse, start compressions
Lay animal on right side and place hands over ribs where its elbow touches the chest. Begin compressions. **Do not give compressions if dog has a pulse.**

4 If not breathing, give mouth-to-mouth
Cats & small dogs: place your mouth over nose and mouth, blow air in.
Medium-large dogs: place your mouth over nose, blow air in.



Repeat Procedure

- Check pulse after 1 minute and then every few minutes
- Continue giving CPR until animal has a pulse or is breathing
- Stop CPR after 20 minutes



Diagram Source:
American Red Cross

Animal Size	Compress Chest	Compressions per breath
Under 30 lbs.	1/2 - 1 inch	5
30-90 lbs.	1 - 3 inches	5
Over 90 lbs.	1 - 3 inches	10

What to do if your pet is not breathing

- Stay calm
- If possible, have another person call the veterinarian while you help your pet.
- Check to see if your pet is unconscious.
- Open your pet's airway by gently grasping its tongue and pulling it forward (out of the mouth) until it is flat. Check the animal's throat to see if there are any foreign objects blocking the airway (see the section above on [Choking](#))
- Perform rescue breathing by closing your pet's mouth (hold it closed with your hand) and breathing with your mouth directly into its nose until you see the animal's chest expand. Once the chest expands, continue the rescue breathing once every 4 or 5 seconds.

