

# Emergency First Aid

*Learn lifesaving techniques that can help buy your injured or sick pet precious time.*

**E**ven the most responsible dog owners can't always protect their pet from a sudden accident or illness. Immediate medical attention can be the difference between life and death. But having knowledge of basic first aid and being equipped with the right tools can play an invaluable role in helping to save your pet's life or reduce the severity of the injury.



## CUTS AND WOUNDS

Using a facecloth, gauze pad, or even a sanitary napkin as a compress, apply direct pressure on the injury to help control the bleeding. Hold the compress in place with your hand or by bandaging it on top of the wound. If blood soaks through, add another compress on top rather than pulling it off, as this may disturb the blood clot.

When there is excessive life-threatening bleeding, create a tourniquet using a shoelace or a cloth strip knotted tightly around the leg and positioned just above the wound. This method may not help with preventing the loss of the injured limb, but it can be effective in saving your pet's life.

Once the bleeding has stopped, clean the wound with warm water and an antibacterial product (e.g., soap or hydrogen peroxide). Then, carefully pat the wound dry with a sterile gauze or clean cloth.

Finally, cover the wound. Start with gauze, a sanitary napkin, or a dressing pad (like Kendall Telfa). Hold it in place with strip of gauze wrapped around the leg. Finish with

## The ABCs of Canine CPR

If your pet stops breathing, you may need to perform CPR while waiting for a veterinary professional to help. Here are the three steps:

### A=Airway

Straighten out the head and neck. Close the mouth and breathe two times into the pet's nostrils. If they're blocked, check inside the mouth. If the mouth is clear, do a doggy Heimlich by squeezing the belly.

### B=Breathing

Once the airway is confirmed clear, determine whether your pet is breathing on his own. If not, continue to breathe into the nostrils. While doing this, feel for a heartbeat on the dog's chest wall behind his elbow. If there isn't one, move to C.

### C=Circulation

With a small dog, lay him on his right side. Compress the chest two to three centimeters behind the elbow. Roll larger dogs on their backs to apply pressure directly on the sternum (chest bone). Compress the chest 15 times and then give two breaths if by yourself. If you have help, give three heart compressions followed by a compression and breath simultaneously. Continue CPR until the dog recovers or you arrive at a veterinary hospital.



an adhesive bandage that sticks to the hair. Get the wound evaluated by a veterinarian as soon as possible—some wounds require continued bandaging and antibiotic therapy; others need suturing.

## BURNS

Fortunately, these injuries are rarer than other injuries, but if your pet does get a burn, apply cool (not ice cold), wet compresses to the injury site for at least 30 minutes. Change it frequently to ensure it stays cool, and have it evaluated by your veterinarian.

## ALLERGIC REACTIONS

These are most often caused by insect bites but can also be triggered by vaccinations, medications, or foods. The worst reaction, which occurs within minutes of the bite, involves shock-like symptoms (see next page) or swelling of the airway. These reactions can become fatal very quickly, but ones of this severity are rare.

The most common clinical sign of an allergic reaction is swelling of the face. The lips, eyelids, and sometimes ear flaps can thicken so much that a Dachshund can look like a Shar-Pei. If you see this hap-

pen, here is good news: Facial swelling only occurs after the risk of death has passed. You may also see hives—extremely itchy bumps that can appear all over the body.

Treatment of an allergic reaction depends on its severity. If the animal is in shock or if the airway is swollen, you should

seek immediate veterinary help. Milder allergic reactions can be treated with antihistamines, and a veterinarian can recommend the right dosage for your pet.

**SHOCK**

Blood loss, allergic reactions, poisonings, and even intense pain can all cause a severe drop in blood pressure, which triggers shock. There are two signs of shock owners can easily recognize:

**A change in pulse.** Check the femoral artery, which courses from the top of the hind leg down the center. Do this when your dog is healthy to see what is normal. During shock, the pulse changes to rapid and weak.

**Pale gums.** When your pet is healthy, the gums will be pink. Pale pink or white gums reflect poor circulation.

**Body temperature** also falls during shock



If your dog is bleeding, apply direct pressure on the injury with a compress.

(normal is 100.4 to 103.1 degrees Fahrenheit). In later stages, your pet can become weak or unresponsive. When a pet is in shock, it is a medical emergency. The brain and heart are at risk of not getting enough blood, and if untreated it can be fatal.

The first step in shock treatment is to keep your dog warm by covering him with blankets. If you are outside, get your dog into a car and turn the heat up. Once you arrive at the hospital, your veterinarian will give intravenous fluids to boost blood pressure. 🦋

Dr. Jeff Grognet is a practicing veterinarian and has written more than 1,000 articles for newspapers and magazines. He also teaches courses for veterinary assistants and pet sitters. He is the author of *Professional Pet Sitting for Love and Money*. It and the courses are available at [veterinaryassistantlearningcenter.com](http://veterinaryassistantlearningcenter.com).

# How to Make a FIRST-AID KIT for Pets & People

**WHAT YOU'LL NEED:**

**WHY YOU'LL NEED IT:**

- ADHESIVE TAPE** (1" width) For bandaging; also can be used as a muzzle
- STERILE DRESSING PADS** (4') (or sanitary napkins) For covering wounds
- BAND-AIDS** For covering small wounds on people
- STRIP GAUZE** For holding the pad onto a wound
- GAUZE SPONGES** (2") For covering or cleaning wounds
- ADHESIVE BANDAGE** The final cover on a bandage that adheres to hair
- MAGAZINE OR NEWSPAPER** Can be used as a temporary splint
- THERMOMETER** For measuring body temperature
- SCISSORS** For cutting bandage material
- ANTISEPTIC SOAP/SOLUTION** For cleaning wounds
- ANTIBIOTIC OINTMENT** (Polysporin) For topical treatment of minor wounds
- PEPTO-BISMOL** For stomach upset, dose is 1/2 to 1 ml per pound body weight, three times daily
- EYE WASH** (sterile saline) For washing eyes (people or dogs)
- HYDROGEN PEROXIDE** (3%) To induce vomiting, the dose is 1 teaspoon per 5 pounds body weight, repeat in 5 minutes if needed
- ELIZABETHAN COLLAR** To prevent dogs from irritating wounds or rubbing their eyes
- BLANKET** (or towel) For warmth or for carrying a pet hammock style
- ROPE LEASH** For restraint



AKC FAMILY DOG

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