



A Human Guide **Canine First Aid**



This Guide

This handy guide for humans will give you an understanding of canine first aid, as well as advice on what to do when your dog is unwell or injured.

Emergencies

In emergency situations, it's important first, to ensure you are others are safe and out of harms way. A dog will become distressed if they sense a level of frantic, so it's important for you to remain calm and others around you to do the same.

Once you've established that is safe and you've assessed the situation, contact your vet. Keep your vets' number on your phone or on your person, always, when leaving the house with your dog. Especially when walking on roads, where moving vehicles are present.



Always phone your veterinary practice first, whatever the situation is, as there may not always be a vet available, but staff may be able to suggest immediate action you can take. Treatment can usually be provided more quickly if the dog is taken to the surgery, rather than if the vet is called out.

If there is a risk of biting, gently place a muzzle on your dog, or wrap tape around its nose and tie behind the ears. If your dog has trouble breathing, then remove the tape immediately. Small dogs may be restrained by wrapping a thick towel over their head.

Drive carefully to your veterinary practice. If advised to go, it's important not to give food or drink to your dog in case anaesthetic is needed.

Is it an emergency?

Sometimes, it is difficult to decide whether emergency attention is needed, or if you can return home to a calm environment and then speak with your vet to request advice.



When do I phone?

Your dog seems weak, is reluctant to get up, or is dull and depressed and they are finding it difficult to breathe or if there is continual coughing causing distress, as well repeated vomiting, particularly with young or elderly dogs.

Diarrhoea is less serious, unless severe, bloody or your dog seems weak or unwell. Feed small amounts of a bland diet, we suggest boiled chicken or white fish, and see your vet if it persists for over a day.

Your dog appears to be in severe pain or discomfort and your dog is trying to urinate or defecate and is unable to. Blockage of the bladder sometimes occurs, especially in males, and can kill if not treated urgently. It could be eclampsia, which needs urgent treatment.

Resuscitation

Evaluate Their Condition

Before you do anything, you must evaluate your dog's condition, so you know what to do.

Is Your Dog Breathing?

- Hold the back of your hand or your cheek up to their nose and feel for air. Also, watch for the rise and fall of their chest.
- If they are not breathing, check their airway for any blockage. Pull the tongue forward as far as possible and remove any objects or liquids in the throat or mouth.



Does your dog have a pulse?

The femoral artery, located on the inner thigh, is the easiest place to find your dog's pulse. Run your hand along the inside of the hind leg until you are almost to the point the leg joins with the body. There you should feel a slight dip where the femoral artery is closest to the skin. Use your fingers (not your thumb) to press down gently and feel for a pulse.

If you cannot feel the pulse at the femoral artery, try just above the metacarpal pad, the large, centre pad, of your dog's front paw, or directly on top of the heart.

Your dog's heart is located on the left side of their chest. To find it, lay your dog on its right side and bend the front left leg, so the elbow touches the chest. The point where the elbow touches on the chest is the location of the heart.

If your dog has a pulse but is not breathing, you can perform artificial respiration (Skip to Step 4). If your dog does not have a pulse, you will need to do CPR, or Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation, which is a combination of artificial respiration and chest compressions.

CPR

Note: Do NOT practice CPR on a healthy dog. CPR can cause serious physical harm to dogs if performed unnecessarily. If your dog shows any signs of resistance to you performing CPR, then they may not need it!

1 Position Your Dog For Treatment

- Lay your dog on a stable, flat surface with their right side down.
- Straighten their head and neck as best you can to create a direct passage for their airway.
- Pull the tongue forward so that it rests against the back of their teeth and shut their mouth.

2 Find The Heart And Prep For Compressions

- Place both of your palms, one over the other, on top of the widest part of the rib cage, near the heart, but not directly over it.

*For smaller dogs weighing 30lbs (13.6kg) or less, cup your hands around the dog's rib cage, placing your fingers on one side of the chest and your thumb on the other.

3 Begin Compressions

- Keeping both elbows straight, push down on the rib cage in firm, quick compressions. Only compress 1/4 to 1/3 of the chest width.
- Repeat compressions at a quick rate of 15 per 10 seconds.

*For smaller dogs, use your thumb and fingers to squeeze the chest to about a 1/4 or 1/3 of its width. Repeat this at a slightly quicker pace than for larger dogs, aiming for 17 compressions in 10 seconds.



4 Begin Artificial Respiration

If performing CPR alone, give your dog artificial respiration after each set of 15 compressions.

- Begin by sealing the dog's lips. Place your hand over the dog's muzzle and ensure the mouth is completely closed.
- Next, place your mouth over the dog's nostrils and blow gently, watching for the chest to lift and expand. If the chest does not rise, blow harder into the nostrils and check that the mouth is properly sealed.

*For smaller dogs, place your mouth over their entire muzzle.

- Remove your mouth from the nose/muzzle between breaths to allow for air return.
- Administer one breath for every 15 compressions.

*If there are two people available to perform CPR, have one person do the compressions, while the other gives artificial respiration after every five compressions.

5 Administer An Abdominal Squeeze

- Place your left hand under your dog's abdomen, and your right hand on top. Push down to squeeze the belly and assist in the circulation of blood back to the heart.
- Give one abdominal squeeze after each set of 15 compressions and one breath.

Continue CPR or artificial respiration until the dog starts to breathe on its own and has regained a steady pulse.

Road Accidents

Even if you believe your dog is well-behaved, they should always be kept on a lead anywhere near traffic, including slow moving vehicles. It's important to make sure your dogs collar is not loose, so we suggest checking it before you leave the house for your walk.

If your dog does manage to escape from their lead/harness, then beware of other cars and talk gently to your dog as you approach. Move slowly and avoid making any sudden movements, as this could cause them to become distressed and panic. If possible, put the lead/harness on if possible and, if necessary, muzzle before handling. Always keep a muzzle on your person when walking, in case of any changes in behaviour.



If your dog does escape and is hit by oncoming traffic then immediately go to your vet, even if they appear to be in no pain and there are no visible signs of injury. There may be internal injuries that are not immediately obvious and leaving them could cause further complications.

If your dog cannot walk and is small, you can pick your dog up by placing one hand at the front of the chest and the other under the hindquarters. You can improvise with larger dogs by creating a stretcher with a coat or a blanket that you have on your person or in your car if nearby.

If your dog is paralysed, there may be a spinal injury, so try to find something rigid, such as a board. Slide your dog gently on to this if possible and cover with a blanket to reduce heat loss. If you need assistance to safely move your dog onto a board, then ask for help from those around you to avoid further injury.

Bleeding

It's important to keep your dog quiet and calm if they are suffering from bleeding, no matter what the severity. Apply a tight bandage to the place where your dog is bleeding. If you don't have access to a bandage, then improvise with a towel or some clothing you are wearing if necessary. If blood is seeping through, apply another tight layer of the material to the affected area. Only ever use a tourniquet as a last resort.

For places you cannot bandage, press a pad firmly onto the wound and hold it in place until the volume of bleeding reduces. Travel to your vet immediately, to avoid further loss of blood.

If you do have bandages available, then place a non-adhesive dressing on the wound and cover with swabs or a cotton bandage. Then place a layer of cotton wool and finally cover this with more cotton bandage. Stick this to the hair at the top with surgical tape and cover the with an adhesive bandage or tape. Do not apply any form of plasters to your dog's hair.

When bandaging limbs, the foot should always be included, or it may swell up. Never leave a bandage on for more than 24 hours.



Posioning

Firstly, try to find the packaging from the substance your dog has swallowed before phone your vet.

Call your vet immediately and do not make your dog sick unless your vet informs you to do so.

Drowning

Never put yourself or others at risk by attempting to rescue a dog.

Wipe away any excess material from the mouth and or nose. Hold your dog upside down by the hind legs until the water has drained out and apply resuscitation techniques if their breathing has stopped.

If your dog seems to recover, always call your vet as complications with excessive water intake afterwards are common.

Heat Stroke

If on a hot day your dog is panting heavily, is exhibiting signs of distress and especially if your dog is short nosed dog, i.e. a boxer, overweight or has been playing or exercising, then they could be suffering from heatstroke.

Ensure your dog is somewhere cool, preferably in a draught and continue to wet their coat with tepid water.

If they continue to exhibit symptoms, then speak with your vet.

Burns

Run cold water over the area where your dog has a burn, for at least five minutes, then contact your vet.

Don't apply or use any ointments or creams on the affected area. If there is a delay in seeing or travelling to your vet, then you can apply a saline soaked dressing to the area.

It's important to make sure your dog is kept both warm and calm.

Stings

Pull out the sting below the poison sac, then bathe the area in water or use a solution of bicarbonate of soda if available.

Applying ice to the affected area will help to soothe. If the sting is in the mouth or throat, contact your vet as it may swell and interfere with their breathing.



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