

## First Aid - Top 10 Things to Know for Dogs

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### .....That May Save Your Pet

There are three keys to managing any emergency with your dog: don't panic, protect yourself from injury, and prepare in advance.

When faced with an injured or severely ill dog, it is important that you spend a moment to assess the situation. Determine if the dog needs to be moved immediately. Decide if there is a danger of further injury to the dog or to first aid givers. For example, great care must be used before assisting a dog injured on a busy roadway. It may be safest to call for help so that traffic can be diverted before anyone provides first aid. You must insure that you won't be injured yourself – either by the surroundings or by the injured animal. Prepare in advance by knowing the location and numbers of emergency animal care facilities. These guidelines should help.

**1. Behavior Knowledge.** Understanding [how to approach an injured pet safely](#) is critical. Animals may respond to fear and pain instinctively, even if they know you well. *You cannot assume that your own pet won't bite you*, because pain or fear may provoke even a docile animal to aggression. Preventing a bite to yourself or other assistants must be your first goal.

Towels can be used to cover the pet's head to help "blind him" and make him feel safer while you transport him. Hand made [muzzles](#) are also very helpful in deterring bites.

**2. Veterinary Telephone Number and Address.** Keep the name and phone number of your family veterinarian and local veterinary emergency facility handy. This simple guideline can help save the life of your pet. Most veterinarians are open during normal business hours – 8 am to 5 pm. Determine how your veterinarian handles emergency calls. Some have emergency pagers, and in larger metropolitan cities, many contribute to or use an emergency facility for after-hour emergency calls. Calling first can often answer simple questions or prevent a trip in the wrong direction. Even in situations that are not apparently life-threatening, your questions or concerns may be best considered by a professional who can advise you whether or not to come in.

**3. Name and Telephone Number of a Friend.** If possible, have a friend assist you, especially if your pet needs to be hospitalized. In the car, it is best to have one person keep the pet calm or

settled while the other drives to the emergency clinic or veterinary hospital.

**4. CPR.** Be familiar with [animal cardiopulmonary resuscitation](#). There are classes offered in pet CPR and this knowledge can be important when faced with a life-threatening situation.

**5. Heimlich Maneuver.** Though not a commonly used or needed skill, knowing how to perform the [Heimlich maneuver for your dog](#) can be a life-saving skill. Only perform the Heimlich if you are absolutely certain your pet is choking on a solid object (such as a toy), and you have been properly trained in the technique. Improperly used, the Heimlich can cause injury to your pet.

**6. Bandaging.** [A bandage](#) helps to cover or apply pressure to a wound to protect or control hemorrhage. Bandages can be fabricated from towels, washcloths, paper towels, or just about any piece of fabric.

**7. Stopping Bleeding.** If there is an obvious source of bleeding, apply pressure to control the hemorrhage. Pressure is best applied with a clean cloth or towel applied directly to the wound.

**8. Towels or Blankets.** Blankets and towels can aid in picking up an injured pet or to control bleeding. You can use a towel to wrap a frightened pet or cover a wound. Frightened pets are often relieved by the dark calm enclosure of a blanket.

**9. Board, Stretcher or Strong Blanket.** Strong sturdy instruments are important to help move or transport severely injured pets that are unable to walk. A small board, a sturdy wool blanket, a piece of canvas or a hammock can be used. Gently roll or move the pet onto the device. Typically, two people are needed to pick up and move the pet when using a stretcher. *Be careful* as this procedure may cause pain to an injured pet, and exposes the helpers to the risk of bite injury.

**10. Finances.** Probably the last thing people think about during an emergency is how to pay the bill. Emergency clinics and veterinary practices are no different than other small businesses, and they need to pay their own bills to survive. Expect to leave a deposit when admitting a pet and be prepared to pay for services rendered. Veterinary insurance can be most beneficial in these situations; however, often the veterinary clinic will require that you pay the bill and the insurance company will reimburse you after the invoice is submitted. Most veterinary clinics do accept major credit cards, and there are some veterinary clinics that offer other financial alternatives through banks.

## Legal Disclaimer

If your pet is showing any signs of distress or you suspect your pet is seriously ill, CONTACT YOUR VETERINARIAN immediately.

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