

# Basic First Aid Guide for Dogs

The information here is provided as a basic, temporary guide. Please do not hesitate to get your dog to the vet when needed.

## Allergies

Allergies can manifest themselves through a wide range of symptoms. Skin problems can occur, as well as breathing difficulties. If your dog is acting strangely, especially after a new medication has been given, contact your veterinarian immediately.

## Bee Stings

Do not use tweezers to pull out the stinger. Instead, scrape it with a credit card or something similar, in the direction of the stinger. Apply mud, an ice pack or monosodium glutamate (MSG) if you have it. MSG neutralizes the poison. Children's Benadryl may be given to reduce swelling. Check with your vet for the proper dosage for your dog's weight and watch the dog closely for signs of a severe reaction.

## Burns

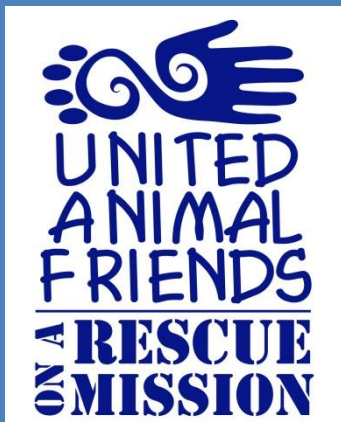
**Symptoms** - Look for blisters, singed hair, slight swelling, redness and pain when the area is touched.

**Help** - Apply cold water compresses for at least 10 minutes. apply antibiotic cream (not ointment - never use a greasy or oily substance), then cover with a non-stick gauze pad and bind with rolled gauze. Treat the dog for shock if the burn is severe (see shock information below). If the mouth area is burned, flush the mouth with cold water from the side. Using a hose is fine but use a gentle stream facing toward the front of the mouth in order to avoid choking the dog by forcing water down the throat.

## Cardiac Arrest

**Symptoms** - The dog may be unconscious, not breathing and have no pulse or heartbeat sound.

**Help** - Start CPR - If administered by one person, place the dog on its right side, kneel behind its head, grab his muzzle and extend the head and support it on your knee. Check the mouth and throat for anything lodged there. If so, remove it, being careful not to push it further down the throat. Seal your mouth around the dog's nose and GENTLY inflate the lungs. Give one breath, then compress the chest 4 times by placing your hand on the chest cavity just below where the



foreleg and elbow meet the body and pushing down on the chest wall about 2 to 4 centimeters (with small dogs, use your fingers instead of your entire hand). Give 15 breaths and 60 chest compressions per minute. Stop when a regular pulse is felt.

It is much better when CPR can be administered by two people. The first steps are the same, but one person provides the breath, followed by the other person giving the chest compressions. Stop when a regular pulse is felt.

### **Choking**

**Symptoms** - Difficulty breathing, blue lips, violent pawing at the face, or collapse.

**Help** - Pull the tongue forward to see if anything is lodged in the throat or if the tongue is swollen (plants such as Dumbcane and Diffenbachia may cause this). If an object is lodged in the throat, remove if possible, taking care not to push it further down the throat. If you cannot get to the object, place the dog on his side, then strike the chest wall forcibly with the palm of your hand three or four times. With larger dogs, give three or four chest compressions. Remove the object once it has been dislodged. If the dog is still not breathing, start mouth-to-nose respiration (see Cardiac Arrest, above).

### **Coat Contamination**

Never use solvents, paint strippers or thinners, concentrated detergents or fabric softeners to clean fur. For paint or tar, soften with petroleum jelly or cut off fur in bad areas. Wash the dog with dog shampoo or baby shampoo.

### **Diarrhea**

**Symptoms** - Frequent bowel movements with soft or watery stool. Sometimes dark or red blood will appear in the stool. This can be caused by irritation or something more severe.

**Help** - Give Pepto Bismol or Kaopectate (better) according to the recommended frequency and dosage by weight. Feed boiled white rice mixed with unseasoned boiled lean hamburger or chicken, using much more rice than meat. Have fresh water available at all times to prevent dehydration. If diarrhea is explosive or the dog is very weak, see your veterinarian immediately.

### **Distended Abdomen**

**Symptoms** - A swollen, painful abdomen, retching, vomiting, groaning and difficulty breathing.

**Help** - If the dog simply ate too much, no treatment is necessary except preventing it from happening again. A real bloating, called "gastric torsion," can be fatal and is a real emergency. The only thing you can do is get to your veterinarian immediately.

### **Drowning**

**Small dog** - Lift the dog by its hind leg and swing gently in a circle to allow the water to run out of the lungs. Administer CPR.

**Large dog** - Pick up behind the ribs with one arm around the abdomen and drape the dog over your shoulder while opening the mouth and pumping the chest. Don't swing larger dogs as this can dislocate joints. Administer CPR.

### **Ears**

Check ears periodically for redness and/or discharge, excess wax or ear mites.

## Eye Injuries

**Symptoms** - Persistent scratching or rubbing the eyes. Eyes may be swollen or shut, and a discharge, bleeding, redness or eye spasms may be seen. The eyeball may even hang from the socket.

**Help** - The first thing to do is to prevent the dog from scratching or rubbing the eye further. Remove any foreign object that is easily removed by using a damp tissue or damp cotton swab, or by flushing with water or saline solution. Do not remove any foreign object that is difficult to extract or embedded in the eye. If the eyeball is out of the socket, keep it moist by surrounding it with gauze soaked in saline solution (contact lens solution). If the problem is a chemical irritation, flush the eye with water. Never touch the eye directly with your fingers or anything dry and never use sharp objects near the eye. Permanent blindness can result from eye injuries, so get to your vet immediately.

## Heatstroke

**Symptoms** - Excessive panting and distress, being disoriented and weak. Bright red gums, vomiting and shock and a rectal temperature of more than 105.8 degrees Fahrenheit.

**Help** - Immerse the dog in cold water or spray with a hose. Take the rectal temperature on a regular basis. Hypothermia from the cold water may occur, so dry the dog as soon as the temperature begins dropping. Never leave your dog in a hot car, even with the windows cracked. Never leave your dog outside on hot days. Even in the shade, temperatures can be life threatening.

## Lameness

**Symptoms** - The dog will be unable to use its leg or have pain when using the leg, may have difficulty on stairs, and will whimper or yipe. The leg may also be at an abnormal angle, be swollen, bruised, or bones could be showing.

**Help** - Control any bleeding or shock first (see Wounds or Shock). Apply a splint if there is a fracture, but don't try to set the bone. Apply a sterile dressing to any exposed bone. If the dog severely struggles, stop treating and get the dog to the vet. If there is paralysis, it can indicate possible damage to the spine. Immobilize the head, neck, and back, and get to the vet immediately.

## Poisoning

**Symptoms** - Signs include seizures, excessive diarrhea, vomiting, lesions of the face or paws, excessive salivating, weakness, depression and shock.

**Help** - Do not induce vomiting if the poison is caustic, such as acids, alkali, or petroleum-based products. Induce vomiting with Ipecac Syrup if the above does not apply. Hydrogen Peroxide or salt water (1 teaspoon per cup) can also be used to induce vomiting. Collect a sample of the vomit for the veterinarian to examine.

## Pet Poison Hotline

Call 1-800-213-6680 or visit [www.petpoisonhelpline.com](http://www.petpoisonhelpline.com) for a 24-hour helpline staffed by veterinary professionals trained in the field of toxicology.

## Pregnancy and Birth

Contact your vet for care, delivery and puppy care.

## Respiratory Arrest

**Symptoms** - The dog is not breathing, but the heartbeat and pulse are strong.

**Help** - Check the mouth, nose and throat for foreign matter and carefully remove. Start mouth-to-nose respiration (see Cardiac Arrest). If drowning is the cause, elevate hind legs to let water drain out, then start mouth-to-nose respiration.

## Seizures

**Symptoms** - There may be extreme restlessness before a seizure, then muscle twitching, head shaking, dilated pupils, increased salivation, loss of consciousness, mild to violent muscle movements, increased breathing rate, loss of control of bodily functions, all followed by an almost normal state.

**Help** - Prevent the dog from hurting itself during the seizure by banging into furniture or falling down stairs. Protect the dog with blankets or padding and keep the dog quiet and in dim light. Don't put your hands in or near the mouth. Get to your vet.

## Shock

**Symptoms** - Shock can be caused by many things. Signs include rapid heart rate, weak pulse noisy and rapid breathing, pale (even white) gums, severe depression, limbs cool to the touch, dilated pupils.

**Help** - RUSH the dog to your vet. Control any bleeding. Keep the dog warm with blanket, and give CPR or mouth-to-nose if necessary.

## Snake Bite

Never use a knife or razor to make an X-shape cut over the wound. Apply an ice pack and tightly wrap the area. Try to keep your dog calm and reduce activity to a bare minimum. Get to a vet immediately. Bring the snake or a detailed description if you can. Ask your vet about the rattlesnake vaccine that is now available.

## Stool

Check stool periodically for worms, even if your dog is on a once-a-month wormer. Also check stool for dark or red blood. Some red can be minor irritation.

## Vomiting

Dogs can vomit for many reasons. Some are minor, like when they eat grass, or throw up a fur ball (yes, dogs too). Sometimes it's more serious. If vomiting is severe, take your dog to the vet immediately, along with a sample of the vomit. If not severe, allow water but give no food for 24 hours for adult dogs. For puppies, allow water but no food for 8 hours. Give anti-emetic medication as per your vet's instructions.

## Urine

Check for blood, which can indicate an internal infection or injury.

## Wounds

**Symptoms** - Wounds can be punctures, cuts, scratches, abrasions, or tearing of the skin.

**Help** - First, control the bleeding by applying direct pressure to the wound by using your hands, a pad, diaper, towel, or anything you can find. Sterile is better. Once the bleeding has slowed or stopped, cut the fur around the wound, place a non-fibrous pad or gauze over the wound and bind it with gauze and tape. If there is severe bleeding of a limb, apply a tourniquet above the wound, just tight enough to allow an oozing from the wound. A tourniquet **MUST** be released every 10 minutes and should only be used as a last resort, if direct pressure doesn't work. Then

clean the wound with an antiseptic liquid and remove any foreign matter with tweezers or pliers. Dress the wound with an antibiotic ointment and cover with a bandage. See your vet right away because your dog may require sutures or internal antibiotic treatment.

### Helpful Tips

In case of an emergency, the best thing you can do is keep a cool head so that you are able to think of what to do, and do it. Never panic. Keep these instructions in your first aid kit or wherever you can quickly get to them. Seek out the help of a family member, neighbor or stranger by shouting for help, but don't waste precious time looking for a helper. Begin treating the injured animal immediately and get to the vet as soon as you can.

Even the sweetest and friendliest of dogs can become terribly frightened when injured or in pain. The dog can easily bite you if you touch a sensitive or injured area. Take precautions by binding the dog's muzzle with a gauze roll or even your tie, belt or scarf. Simply holding the muzzle won't ensure protection; the dog will most likely break away from your grip when it struggles. Be careful, though, with short-nosed breeds - you don't want to cut off their air supply. The more you can restrain the animal without hurting it further, the better able you'll be to treat it.

Treat symptoms in order:

1. Always treat severe bleeding first by applying direct pressure to the wound.
2. Next, treat for shock by keeping the animal warm with a blanket or jacket.
3. Then begin CPR and mouth-to-nose treatment, after checking the airway for obstructions and removing them.
4. Get to a veterinarian as soon as possible!

The easiest way to:

- give liquid is with a medical syringe with the needle removed.
- give a pill is hidden inside some cream cheese or pushed inside a small piece of hard cheese or treat, or place the pill on the back of the tongue and hold the mouth up and shut while tickling the neck until the dog swallows it.
- give eye drops is to hold the dog's head up and eyelid open, then drop liquid directly onto the eyeball.
- give ear drops is to pull the ear back, drop into ear canal, drop ear back into position and massage the ear. Don't let the dog shake its head until done.
- give eye ointment is to apply a thin strip along the inside of the lower lid.
- remove a tick is to grab the tick by the head or mouth parts using a pair of fine-tipped tweezers. Do not squeeze or crush the tick's body as that might release harmful bacteria into your pet's bloodstream. Without jerking or twisting, pull firmly and steadily direct outward. Make sure you kill the tick afterward. Put antibiotic on the bite area.
- carry a dog is to grasp the dog with your arms outside of its legs, around its rump and chest. A severely injured dog or one too heavy to carry should be carried in a box, sheet or blanket by two people.
- feel the pulse is inside of the hind leg. The heartbeat can be felt on the chest behind the elbow.
- observe breathing is to watch the chest movement.