

Pet Emergency Techniques

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation

CPR, a commonly practiced lifesaving technique for humans, can be performed on dogs and cats as well, though it is rarely needed. The need may arise, however, due to trauma. Signs that CPR is necessary include no pulse respiration and unconsciousness. Begin CPR as soon as you discover that no respiration or heartbeat can be detected and continue it until a veterinarian can assist you. Without CPR, the dog may die or suffer permanent brain damage.

If your pet stops breathing, but has a pulse:

1. Place him on his side, open his mouth, pull out his tongue and check for foreign objects that might be lodged in the back of the mouth.
2. Clear away any mucous or blood, then close the pet's mouth and place your mouth over his muzzle, completely covering the nose.
3. Blow easily into the nose and watch for the chest to expand. Repeat 12 times per minute until the animal begins breathing on his own or until you get to the veterinary clinic.

If your dog or cat has no pulse or respiration:

Under these conditions, CPR needs to be combined with cardiac compressions in order to save the pet's life. Though it helps to have another person there to perform the compressions while you continue artificial respiration, you can do it by yourself.

1. Between each breath (given about every 5 seconds) place the heel of your hand over the pet's heart (at about the fifth rib up, just behind where the front limb attaches to the body) and press down quickly with moderate pressure, then release. (With a small dog or cat, you may need to use 4 or even 3 fingers instead of the heel of your hand.)

The ribs should compress about 1 inch. Compress the chest in this way 5 times between each breath.

2. Continue this procedure until you get to the vet or until the dog or cat is breathing on his own with a normal pulse. Use your best judgment as to how long to continue administering CPR. If the pet does not respond within 15 minutes and there is no chance of getting to a vet, it may be prudent to stop.

The Heimlich Maneuver

1. With the pet lying on his side, place the heel of your hand just below the last rib (where the diaphragm is) and give 2 or 3 quick inward pushes. This forces air up the windpipe, hopefully dislodging the object.
2. With a larger dog, you may be able to actually get behind the animal and perform the Heimlich maneuver in the same manner used on humans - by wrapping your arms around the pet, placing one fist into his abdominal area just below his sternum and last rib and then pushing the fist sharply inward, using the other hand as an additional power source.
3. Whether you are immediately successful or not, make every effort to get to an emergency clinic, preferably with your pet and you in the backseat of a car being driven by someone else.

Treating Wounds

Small Cuts or Abrasions

Trim away hair with scissors or an electric clipper, taking care not to irritate the wound. Flush the wound with 3% hydrogen peroxide and clean the wound with a disinfectant soap. Flush with hydrogen peroxide again, and then apply an antibiotic powder or ointment. Dress the wound if possible with gauze wrapping and adhesive tape or Vet Wrap.

Large Wounds

Perform the same procedure as with small cuts and then get to the vet as soon as possible as the wound may need stitches. If it is bleeding steadily, apply pressure to it with a clean gauze pad or cloth. A tourniquet should only be used if a wound on a limb is bleeding profusely. To apply a tourniquet, tightly tie a length of fabric around the appendage, directly above the wound. To avoid tissue death, you will need to loosen the tourniquet every five minutes for thirty seconds at a time.

Burns

Apply cool water or ice to the affected area, cover with an antiseptic cream and a clean gauze pad, then seek veterinary help. Burns can have dire consequences and should not be taken lightly.

Breaks and Fractures

After carefully bringing the pet indoors, splint the affected limb with layers of clean cloth wrapped around a stiff piece of cardboard, wood or rolled newspaper and an adhesive tape (masking or duct tape can also be used) then get to the vet immediately.

Car Accidents

If your dog or cat has been hit by a car, realize that he is frightened and may bite defensively. You may want to wrap and tie a cloth strip around his muzzle to prevent biting. Next, carefully move a large blanket underneath the injured animal and then, (with the help of friend) gently lift the blanket and pet into a car. Take him to the nearest emergency clinic as soon as possible. Have one person stay in the backseat with the animal to calm him and if necessary, to control bleeding by applying pressure.

Poisoning

Obtain and keep a sample of the toxic substance, then call your vet. He or she will advise you whether to induce vomiting by using salt water or syrup if ipecac or 3% hydrogen peroxide. Or you may be advised to force-feed the dog or cat water, milk or even activated charcoal in order to absorb, dilute or deactivate the poison. Then get the pet to the vet as soon as possible.

Normal Vital Signs

A dog's vital signs give you a glimpse into the state of his health. If your pet's vital signs differ substantially from any of the following, see your vet as soon as possible.

Temperature: 100 to 102F (38-39 C) (Smaller dogs and cats can have normal temperatures that run up to a degree higher than larger animals).

Resting pulse: 75 to 120 beats per minute (smaller dogs and cats have faster resting heartbeats that can be 10 to 20 percent higher than larger animals).

Respiration: 10 to 30 breaths per minute, depending on the pet's size. A toy dog and cat would be on the high end of the range, whereas a giant dog would be near the low end.

Emergency Kit

Should an emergency arise, you will have saved time by having a preassembled kit of emergency supplies on hand. Place the following items in a container or box and keep it in a convenient place.

- ❖ Activated Charcoal
- ❖ Adhesive tape
- ❖ Antibiotic ointment
- ❖ Aspirin
- ❖ Blanket
- ❖ Bach Rescue Remedy (for shock)
- ❖ Cotton gauze pads (3" square)
- ❖ Cotton gauze roll (3" wide)
- ❖ Cotton-tipped applicators
- ❖ Disinfectant soap
- ❖ Hydrogen peroxide (3%)
- ❖ Kaopectate
- ❖ Gentian Ear & Skin Treatment)
- ❖ Penlight (small)
- ❖ Petroleum Jelly
- ❖ Rectal thermometer
- ❖ Rubbing alcohol
- ❖ Scissors and tweezers
- ❖ Styptic powder (stop bleeding)
- ❖ Wound antibiotic powder or colloidal silver