



Animal Emergency Center of North Fulton

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Pet First Aid and Emergencies

Animal Emergency Center of North Fulton has compiled this information to teach you how to provide first aid when appropriate, to know who to call and where to go in the event of a true emergency, and to assist you in knowing the difference.

Conditions Requiring Immediate Attention

If your pet has any of the following symptoms, do not waste time! Call and take him/her to a veterinarian immediately! First, call your primary care veterinarian. If they are not open, their answering service or machine will most likely refer you to an emergency center. Our hours are 6 p.m. to 8 a.m. every weekday; we open at 12:00 noon on Saturday and remain open until 8:00 a.m. Monday morning; and we are open 24 hours on major holidays. We will always be happy to help you.

- Loss of consciousness
- Cardiopulmonary arrest (No heart rate, not breathing)
- Labored breathing or any breathing abnormality
- White, brick red, yellow, or blue mucous membranes (gums)
- Excessive bleeding
- Open fractures
- Penetrating wounds to the thorax (chest) or abdomen
- Urethral obstruction (not able to urinate)
- Seizures lasting longer than 4-5 minutes or repeated seizure activity
- History of poisoning
- Heat prostration (heat stroke)
- Hit by car – No matter how they seem
- Allergic reaction
- Dystocia (difficulty giving birth)
- Gastric torsion or bloat
- Profuse diarrhea or vomiting
- Eye injury
- Weak or disoriented
- Contagious disease
- Burns
- Snakebites



First Aid for Pets

When your pet has an emergency, it is very important to be prepared; and when your pet is injured or ill, it is advisable to contact your veterinarian. First aid and the recommended first aid kit are not a substitute for veterinary treatment. However, knowing basic first aid could help save your pet's life. The following is a first aid kit checklist of items to have handy in case of an emergency.

Pet First Aid Kit

- Your veterinarian's phone number
- Gauze to wrap wounds or muzzle animal
- Adhesive tape for bandages
- Nonstick bandages (i.e., Telfa pads) to protect wounds or control bleeding
- Clean, old towels
- Hydrogen Peroxide (3 percent)
- Activated charcoal to absorb poison (Be sure to get the advice of your veterinarian or local poison control center before inducing vomiting or treating an animal for poisoning)
- Large syringe without needle or eyedropper (to give oral treatments)
- Muzzle (soft cloth, rope, necktie or nylon stocking) or use a towel to cover a small animal's head. Do not use in case of vomiting, difficulty breathing or when a foreign object is caught in the mouth.
- Stretcher (A door, board, piece of plywood, blanket or floor mat)



How to muzzle a dog

Even a very kind animal may bite when he/she is frightened or injured, so it is almost always a good idea to place a muzzle on your pet before handling him/her. There are three situations when you should NOT use a muzzle.

- If your pet is having difficulty breathing
- If your pet has a foreign body in his/her mouth that cannot be retrieved.
- If your pet is vomiting, a muzzle can cause aspiration

In any other situation, a muzzle does not harm your pet and can prevent you from being bitten.

Nylon hose, a man's necktie, a shoestring, or a leash can all be used as an effective muzzle. Place the center of it under the jaw, cross over the nose, cross under the jaw, then tie behind the neck.

Restraint and Transport

Dogs

In order to restrain an animal effectively, you must know how to assess animal behavior. Then, to avoid discomfort to the animal, strive to apply the least amount of effective restraint possible.

If a dog is fearful, which can cause them to bite, they will avoid eye contact, keep their head down, ears will lie back on the head, and the tail will be between the legs. If he/she feels dominant and aggressive (these will also bite), they will stare, ears raised and forward, the hair on the back will be raised and they may or may not growl. Move slowly, talk to the pet in a calm voice and, unless the condition is one of the three exceptions, place a muzzle.

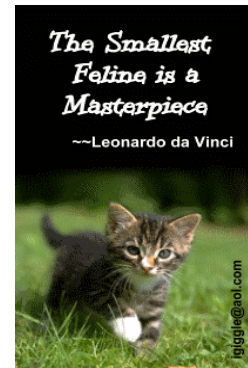
If a dog appears to have a fracture of one leg, most dogs are still capable of walking on three legs to a vehicle for transportation. If the dog is unable to stand, gently slide him/her onto a rigid structure, such as a piece of plywood. If plywood or a wide board is not available, a blanket or floor mat can be used. Slide the dog by grasping the skin at the back of the shoulders and above the hips to pull him/her onto the transport device. Do not pull on the legs, tail or neck area.

Cats

Cats are often stunned after suffering some type of trauma and will initially act docile, but within minutes they may become upset and fractious. Use caution. All animals, especially cats will react negatively to rapid movement, so move slowly. Carefully and gently “scruff” (take hold of the skin at the back of the neck) the cat. Unless you suspect fractures, you can also wrap the cat snugly in a towel, covering its front legs and holding them against the body. Do not try to place a muzzle.

One good way of transporting a cat is to place a large towel over the entire cat, scruff the cat’s neck and pick up the towel and the cat, then place both in a laundry basket. If the cat is upset, you can place a blanket over the top of the basket, or turn the basket upside down in your vehicle for transport.

If the cat is not able to stand, or is lying still, do not try to pick him/her up! He/she could have a broken back. To transport a cat that cannot move or stand, gently slide the cat onto a rigid structure, like a piece of plywood or cardboard and take him/her to a veterinarian.



Bite Wounds

Approach the pet carefully to avoid being bitten. If it is a dog, muzzle the animal. Check the wound for contamination or debris. If debris is present, clean the wound with saline or a balanced electrolyte solution like Lactated Ringers (if available). If these are not available, tap water can be used. Loosely wrap large wounds to keep them free of debris during transport to your veterinarian. Bite wounds often become infected and need professional care, so once the bleeding has been stopped and the wound has been cleaned, contact a veterinarian.

Bleeding

If your pet is bleeding from an injury, apply firm, direct pressure to the area with a clean cloth. Hold the pressure on the area for at least 10 minutes. Frequently releasing the pressure to check the wound will prolong the clotting process). Do not use a tourniquet and avoid bandages that might cut off circulation. Call your veterinarian.

Breathing Stops

Any time an animal either has difficulty breathing, or stops breathing, immediately call and head to a veterinarian! You can, however, do the following: (If you have help, you may want to do these things on the way to the doctor)...

- Check to see if the animal is choking on a foreign object (see Choking).
- If not breathing, place the animal on a firm surface with its left side up. Check for a heartbeat by listening at the area where the elbow touches the chest. If you find a heartbeat, but no breathing, close the animal's mouth and breathe directly into its nose (not the mouth) until the chest expands. Repeat 12 to 15 times per minute.
- If there is no pulse, apply heart massage. The heart is located in the lower half of the chest, behind the elbow of the front leg. Place one hand under the heart (between the firm object the dog is lying on and the dog) to support the chest. Place the other hand over the heart and compress firmly, but gently. This can be done on cats and small pets with the thumb and forefingers of one hand. Apply heart massage 80 to 120 times per minute for large animals; and 100-150 times per minute for small ones. Alternate heart massage with breathing. Give one breath for every 15-20 heart compressions.

It must be noted that even in the hands of well-trained veterinary health professionals, successful cardio-pulmonary resuscitation occurs in a very low percentage of the cases it is attempted on. The success rate is a bit higher in cases of drowning and electrical shock.

Burns

Burns can be from chemicals, excessive heat or electrical.

Symptoms: Include singed hair, blisters, and redness of skin that is painful to the touch. Flush the burn immediately with large amounts of cool water. Apply a towel dampened with cool water to the area for transport. Call and take to your veterinarian.

- Do not apply ointments, creams or any topical medications to the area.
- If it is a chemical burn, your pet may have breathing difficulty.
- If it is an electrical burn (ex: pet bit into an electric cord), Make sure the cord is no longer in the pet's mouth before touching!! If cord is still in the mouth, unplug it!! Then call and take to your veterinarian.

A burn should always be considered an emergency. There can be serious side effects that are not always apparent initially.

Diarrhea

It should be noted that many pet owners mistakenly think a straining pet is constipated, when they actually have diarrhea or are straining to urinate. Treat for diarrhea only after very loose stool is actually seen.

If the diarrhea is bloody, or if it appears gelatin-like, consult a veterinarian. These could be symptoms of colitis or a viral infection.

Once you have determined that your pet has diarrhea, withhold food for 12-24 hours. Your pet should continue to have access to water. After 24 hours begin feeding your pet a bland diet.

See How to Prepare a Bland Diet below for instructions. Offer only the bland diet for 2 days, and then slowly begin to add their regular diet to the bland one. Gradually return to the regular diet.

How to Prepare a Bland Diet

You can use the following:

- Boiled, de-boned, skinless chicken
- Boiled hamburger with grease drained completely
- White rice
- Fat free chicken or beef broth
- Gerber chicken baby food



Cook the meat that your pet prefers and drain as much fat as possible. Chop or crumble meat. Boil white rice and mix 3 parts rice with one part meat. Begin feeding small portions.

Fractures

Symptoms: Inability to use a limb, limping, limb at odd angle, pain.

If the pet is a dog, place a muzzle. Do not muzzle a cat. If bleeding is present, and if it can be done without manipulating the limb, gently apply pressure to the bleeding area. If the fracture is in the lower part of a limb and the animal can walk on three legs, slowly assist the pet to a vehicle. Then, supporting the broken limb to keep it in the normal position as much as possible, help the pet into the vehicle. Call and take him/her to your veterinarian.

- Do not attempt to splint the fracture. You may do more harm than good.
- Do not try to manipulate the limb. This can cause nerve damage or could cause blood clots to move.
- Monitor your pet's mucous membranes (gums) for signs of shock. They should be pink. If they become brick red, pale, or white, your pet may be in shock, making it even more important to find a veterinarian immediately.

Heatstroke

Symptoms: Rapid or difficulty breathing, high body temperature, vomiting, panting, tongue hanging from mouth, dazed, "hot" to the touch, reluctant to stand, collapse



If heatstroke is suspected, take the pet's temperature. Normal body temperature for a dog or cat is 100 to 102.5 degrees. With heat stroke, temperature may rise to 105 to 108 degrees.

Cool immediately. Place in a bathtub or use a garden hose. Concentrate on cooling the head, heart, lower abdomen and feet. Use cool or tepid water, ***not*** cold water. **No ice!** **Stop the cool-water bath when the pet's temperature reaches 103 degrees.** Wrap pet in a large towel or blanket, soaked with cool water for transport to your veterinarian.

- This occurs most commonly when a dog is left in a car. Remember that a closed car can become much hotter than the outside temperature!

- Although this most commonly occurs from being locked in cars, many pets are susceptible in other situations.
- Old, brachiocephalic (flat nose) dogs, and breeds with thick coats (For example: Huskies and Malamutes) are more susceptible.
- It can occur from excitement or play, especially on hot, humid days

Heat stroke is a true emergency!! Take your pet to a veterinarian immediately!



Poisoning

Symptoms: Vomiting, muscle tremors, seizures, weakness, depression, salivation, bleeding (rat poison)

If you know what your pet ingested, call your veterinarian or poison control immediately to find out if it is appropriate to induce vomiting. See How to Induce Vomiting below.

If possible, save the package from the substance the pet ingested or record the name of the product, the ingredients and amounts of each. In the case of toxins or chemicals on the skin from oils, paints, insecticides or other contact irritants, ask your veterinarian or poison control if you should wash the irritant off your pet before transport to a veterinarian.

Here are 10 tips for a poison-safe household:

- Be aware of the plants you have in your house and in your pet's yard. The ingestion of Azalea, oleander, mistletoe, sago palm, Easter lily, or yew plant material, can poison an animal and could be fatal.
- When cleaning your house, never allow your pet access to the area where cleaning agents are stored. Cleaning agents have a variety of properties. Some may only cause a mild stomach upset, while others could cause severe burns to the tongue, mouth and stomach.
- When using rat or mouse baits, ant or roach traps, or snail and slug baits, place the products in areas that are inaccessible to your animals. Most baits contain sweet smelling inert ingredients, such as jelly, peanut butter and sugars, which can be very attractive to a pet.
- Never give your animal any medications unless under the direction of a veterinarian. Many medications that are used safely in humans can be deadly when used inappropriately in animals. For example, one extra strength Acetaminophen tablet (500 mg) can kill a seven pound cat.
- Keep all prescription and over the counter drugs out of your pet's reach, preferably in closed cabinets. Pain killers, cold medicines, anti-cancer drugs, antidepressants, vitamins and diet pills are common examples of human medications that could be potentially lethal, even in small doses. One regular strength Ibuprofen (200 mg) could cause stomach ulcers in a ten-pound dog.
- Never leave chocolates unattended. Approximately one half ounce or less of baking chocolate per pound of body weight can cause problems. Even small amounts can cause pancreatic problems.
- Many common household items have been shown to be lethal in certain animal species. Miscellaneous items that are highly toxic even in low quantities include:

— Pennies - have a high concentration of zinc.

- Mothballs - contain naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene; one or two balls can be life threatening in most species.
- Potpourri oils, fabric softener sheets, automatic dishwasher detergents – contain cationic detergents, which could cause corrosive lesions.
- Batteries – contain acids or alkali, which can also cause corrosive lesions.
- Homemade play dough – contains a high quantity of salt.
- Winter heat source agents like hand or foot warmers – they contain high levels of iron.
- Cigarettes, coffee grounds and alcoholic drinks are toxic to animals.

- All automotive products, such as oil, gasoline and antifreeze, should be stored in areas away from your pet’s access. As little as one teaspoon of antifreeze (ethylene glycol) can be deadly to a seven-pound cat and less than one tablespoon can be lethal to a 20-pound dog.
- Before buying or using flea products on your pet, or in your household, contact your veterinarian to discuss what types of flea products are recommended for your pet. Read ALL information before using a product on your pets or in your home. Always follow label instructions. When a product is labeled, “for use in dogs only,” this means that the product should NEVER be applied to cats. Also, when using a fogger or a house spray, make sure to remove all pets from the area for the time period specified on the container. If you are uncertain about the usage of any product, contact the manufacturer or your veterinarian to clarify the directions BEFORE using the product.
- When treating your lawn or garden with fertilizers, herbicides or insecticides, always keep your animals away from the area until the product dries completely. Always store such products in an area that will ensure no possible pet exposure.

Here is a quick reference guide to the more common house and garden plants and foods that are toxic to most animals, as well as children. If you have these plants or foods, there is no need to dispose of them, just keep them away from pets and children.

- C** = cardiovascular toxin
- GI** = gastrointestinal toxin
- R** = respiratory toxin
- N** = neurological toxin
- KO** = kidney/organ toxin
- * = Substance is especially dangerous and can be fatal.



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| Alcohol (all beverages, ethanol, methanol, isopropyl) | N |
| Almonds* (kernel in the pit contains cyanide) | R |
| Amaryllis bulb* | GI, N |
| Anthurium* | KO |
| Apricot* (kernel in the pit contains cyanide) | R |
| Autumn Crocus* (Colchicum autumnale) <u>very poisonous</u> | GI, C |
| Avocado* (leaves, seeds, stem, skin) <u>fatal to birds</u> | C, KO |
| Azalea (entire rhododendron family) | C, GI, N |
| Begonia* | KO |
| Bird of Paradise | GI |
| Bittersweet | GI |
| Bleeding Heart* | C |

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| Boxwood | GI |
| Bracken Fern | N |
| Buckeye | GI, N |
| Buttercup (Ranunculus) | GI |
| Caffeine | GI, N |
| Caladium* | KO |
| Calla Lily* | KO |
| Carolina Jasmine | CR |
| Castor bean* <u>can be fatal if chewed</u> | GI, C, N |
| Cherry (kernel in the pit contains cyanide) | R |
| Chinese sacred or heavenly bamboo* (contains cyanide) | R |
| Chocolate* | GI, N |
| Choke cherry, unripe berries* (contains cyanide) | R |
| Chrysanthemum (a natural source of pyrethrins) | GI, N |
| Clematis | GI |
| Crocus bulb | GI, N |
| Croton (Codiaeum sp.) | GI |
| Cyclamen bulb | GI |
| Delphinium, Larkspur, Monkshood* | N |
| Dumb Cane* (Dieffenbachia), (Severe mouth swelling, contains cyanide) | GI, R |
| Elderberry, unripe berries* (contains cyanide) | R |
| English Ivy (All Hedera species of Ivy) | GI |
| Fig (Ficus) (General allergan, dermititis) | |
| Four-O'clocks (Mirabillis) | GI |
| Foxglove* (Digitalis) <u>can be fatal</u> | C |
| Garlic* (raw or spoiled) | GI |
| Hyacinth bulbs | GI |
| Hydrangea* (contains cyanide) | R |
| Holly berries | GI |
| Iris Corms | GI |
| Jack-in-the-Pulpit* | KO |
| Jimson weed* | R |
| Kalanchoe* <u>can be fatal</u> | C |
| Lantana* <u>can cause liver failure</u> | KO |
| Lily (bulbs of most species) | GI |
| Lily-of-the-Valley* <u>can be fatal</u> | C |
| Lupine species | N |
| Marijuana or Hemp* (Cannabis) <u>can be fatal</u> | N, GI |
| Milkweed* | C |
| Mistletoe berries* <u>can cause shock</u> | N, C |
| Morning Glory* <u>seeds toxic to birds</u> | N |
| Mountain Laurel | C |
| Narcissus, Daffodil | G |
| Oak* (remove bark for use as a bird perch) | KO |
| Oleander* <u>can be fatal</u> | C |
| Onions* (raw or spoiled) | GI |
| Peach* (kernel in the pit contains cyanide) | R |
| Pencil cactus/plant* (Euphorbia sp.) <u>causes dermatitis</u> | GI |
| Philodendron (all species)* | KO |
| Poinsettia (many hybrids, avoid them all) <u>causes dermatitis</u> | GI |

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| Potato (leaves and stem) | GI, N |
| Rhubarb leaves* | KO |
| Rosary pea* (Arbus sp.) <u>can be fatal if chewed</u> | GI, C, N |
| Schefflera* (Umbrella plant) | KO |
| Shamrock* (Oxalis sp.) | KO |
| Spurge (Euphorbia sp.) | GI |
| Tomatoes (leaves and stem) | GI, N |
| Yew* <u>fatal to most animals</u> | C |

How to Induce Vomiting



When indicated, Hydrogen Peroxide is the best household choice to induce vomiting. Give the pet one to two teaspoons for every 20 pounds of body weight. Place the proper amount at the back of your pet's tongue. This may be repeated every 5 minutes for 30 minutes, or until the pet vomits. Old Hydrogen Peroxide is less effective and may require more doses. If your pet has not vomited in 30 minutes, call your veterinarian.

Seizures

Symptoms: Can range from slightly twitching to violent muscle twitching, salivation, loss of control of urination and defecation, loss of consciousness

Move pet away from staircases and objects that could be harmful. Turn down lights and minimize noise. Place on a blanket for padding and protection. Animals do not swallow their tongue during seizures; so do not place your hands in their mouth. Do not try to restrain the pet. Time the seizure. Most seizures last from 2-3 minutes. After the seizure is over, keep your pet calm and quiet until they are conscious and able to walk.

Take your pet to a veterinarian.

Shock

Shock is a metabolic state resulting from an inadequate supply of oxygen to tissue or an inability of tissues to utilize oxygen properly.



Symptoms: Irregular breathing, dilated pupils, brick red (initially), pale, or white gums, or weak pulses.

Can occur with serious injury, fright, or various diseases. Keep animal warm with blankets and/or hot water bottles. Elevate the lower body to allow blood to flow to the heart. Call and transport to a veterinarian immediately.

Vomiting

Withhold food and water for 6-8 hours. If no vomiting occurs, give your pet ice cubes after 2 hours. After 4 hours without vomiting, offer very small amounts of water. Let him/her drink for about 5 seconds and take water away. Wait 30 minutes without vomiting, let him/her drink for another 5 seconds. If no vomiting occurs, slowly increase the amount of time you allow them to drink. Remember, it is better for your pet to keep down a small amount of water than to drink a

large amount, only to vomit it back up. Start your pet on a bland diet and slowly change back to their regular diet.

If vomiting continues, or if it contains blood, contact your veterinarian.



Choking

This most commonly occurs when a dog catches a ball that is too small, or when chewing on rawhide.

Symptoms: Difficulty breathing, excessive pawing at the mouth, blue lips and tongue

A choking pet is not common and can be confused with a coughing pet. If possible, call ahead so your veterinarian can be prepared and take your pet to them immediately.

Be very careful! A choking pet will be frantic and may even bite without meaning to. If the animal can still breathe, it is best to keep him/her calm and take them to a veterinarian immediately.

Do not place a muzzle on a choking pet.

If they are not breathing, look into the mouth to see if a foreign object is visible. If possible, clear the airway by removing the object, being very careful not to push it further down the throat. Do not reach down the throat unless you can *see* a foreign object.

If a foreign object is lodged too deep, or if the pet collapses, place your hands on both sides of the animal's rib cage and apply firm, quick pressure; or place the animal on his/her side and quickly press the side of the rib cage firmly with the palm of your hand three or four times. Repeat this procedure until the object is dislodged or until you arrive at your veterinarian's office.

Dangerous Toys

Your cat may love that ball of yarn and your dog may chase after that stick all day, but pet owners must be cautious when offering toys to their pets. Many items that become pet toys, either with or without your knowledge, can be dangerous or even fatal to your pet. If not used appropriately, even store bought pet toys can be dangerous.

- Sticks and bones can splinter and cause choking or vomiting. They can also perforate the mouth, throat or intestines. Hard bones can easily damage teeth. Instead, use hard, non-splintering chew toys to play fetch or to allow your pet to gnaw.
- A chewing pet can shred soft, latex toys. If the toy includes a squeaking mechanism, the squeaker can be swallowed or cause choking.
- Superballs, handballs, and other types of balls can cause choking and intestinal obstruction if ingested. In very large breed dogs, even tennis balls can also cause these problems.
- Towels, socks, underwear and other similar articles of clothing or materials can be swallowed, causing intestinal obstruction.



- Some dogs like to eat rocks. This can cause broken teeth and intestinal obstruction if swallowed.
- Be careful if you offer your pet rawhides. If you do, watch him/her to assure they do not swallow them too quickly, or they can also cause intestinal obstruction if swallowed.
- Cats sometimes enjoy hiding in bags. However, if the bag is plastic and they manage to get their head stuck in the handle and panic, choking or suffocating can occur.
- String, yarn and rubber bands are enticing toys for cats, but these can be swallowed and become lodged in the intestines, causing blockage. Even if only partially swallowed, they can result in serious problems. For instance, one end of the string can wrap around your cat's tongue, while the rest of the string is swallowed. If you ever see your cat with string (or a similar object) caught in its mouth, assure none has been swallowed before taking it away. ***Never*** try to pull it out if it has been partially swallowed. If the string is lodged internally, pulling it can cut the cat's intestines, causing serious injury or death. If this happens, take your cat to a veterinarian immediately.
- Be aware of sharp objects that can injure eyes or cause cuts.
- For birds, bells can be a problem. Most parrots that are medium-sized or larger can take a bell apart and choke on the clapper.
- Leather, if not specially tanned, can be toxic to birds.
- Paint and wood preservatives can also be toxic to birds.

Again, the most common hazard is a toy that are inappropriately sized for your pet. If the toy is too small, it can cause choking.

If a toy or part of a toy is swallowed, signs of problems can occur rapidly, or could appear days later. Signs to look for are vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain, reluctance to eat and lethargy. If you notice any of these signs, call your veterinarian right away.



Used appropriately and with common sense, toys can provide hours of entertainment and exercise for your pet. It is a good idea, however, to supervise your pet during play. Not only will this minimize the chance of accidents or injury; it will provide your pet with the thing he/she wants more than anything in the world...***quality time with you!***

Please remember, not all conditions can be covered in this packet or class. If you are unsure of your pet's condition, consult your veterinarian immediately.

