

## **FIRST AID IN TRAUMATIC INJURY**

### **SIGNS**

You may witness the accident and injuries may be obvious. Often, though, the only external signs are a few scrapes. They may be limping, or have difficulty breathing.

### **CALL YOUR VET ASAP. ASSESS BREATHING.**

Lung injuries can occur with accidents. Is your dog breathing normally, or is breathing labored with mouth open. A common injury is pneumothorax, in which a part of the lung collapses, causing progressive respiratory distress. (Mouth breathing, large, deep chest or stomach movements in an attempt to get air into the lungs). In this case you need IMMEDIATE veterinary care.  
**CHECK HEARTBEAT.**

The easiest way is to place your ear against the chest behind the left elbow. You can also feel for a pulse by placing your fingers in the groin (inside the thigh of the back legs). The normal canine heart rate is 70-160 beats per minute. The heart rate of larger dogs is on the mid to lower end of this scale, while the heart rate of smaller dogs is on the mid to upper range.

### **CPR**

If your pet is non-responsive, then go through the CPR steps.

1. Assess responsiveness
2. Establish a patent airway
3. Perform rescue breathing
4. Cardiac massage - establishing circulation

You will have to exert a lot of force with large dogs, but don't worry about breaking ribs for they will heal.

After every minute, stop and check for a pulse or breathing.

Continue heart massage compressions and the rescue breathing until you hear a heart beat and feel regular breathing. ONCE your pet is breathing and his heart is beating, CALL your veterinarian immediately!

### **GUM COLOR.**

This is a great measure of blood pressure, to determine if shock is present, and to evaluate for internal bleeding. The gums should be a healthy pink color. If they are pale, then your pet needs to be treated for shock and transported to a vet ASAP.

### **STOP BLEEDING.**

If there are obvious areas of bleeding, then stop them NOW. Apply direct pressure with a clean cloth or gauze. Hold this in place for at least 5 minutes.

### **COVER WOUNDS.**

Covering open wounds will keep them clean and help prevent infection. Bandage material is preferable, but a towel will work fine until you get to the vet.

### **SUPPORT A FRACTURE.**

If your pet is not using a leg, suspect a fracture. If the leg is dangling, and bent at an unusual angle, then you should attempt to immobilize it until you get veterinary care. Place a towel around the leg. Wrap the inside of the leg with material to partially splint the limb: newspaper, magazine or even bubble wrap. Cover this with tape to keep the newspaper next to the towel.

### **MOVE WITH CARE.**

Carefully transport your pet. A firm surface works best. If possible, put your pet on a wooden board. This is best done by first gently sliding him onto a sheet, then sliding the sheet onto the board. If you don't have any of this available, don't worry, the most important thing is rapid transport to your vet. Lift your pet by cradling him (left arm around his chest and right arm around his rear).

Every pet owner should have a Pet First Aid Kit. Here are some basic items that all first aid kits should contain.

1. Rectal Thermometer - the newer electronic kind works best. The electronic ones beep when they are finished registering a temperature. They are slightly smaller than the glass kind. They do not break as easily. They can be covered with thin sleeves to halt the spread of germs. They can also be used as oral thermometers. They do have a battery which will need replacing and they are more expensive than the glass ones. [normal canine temperature - 100.5 to 102.5F]
2. Lubricating jelly to lubricate thermometer
3. Gel packs that can be used for hot and cold compresses
4. Adhesive tape to secure bandages - both non-stick tape and water proof tape
5. Blunt tipped scissors (a must for animal first aid - used for cutting hair away from wounds)
6. Bandage scissors
7. Splints (popsicle sticks from a craft store are useful for small dogs)
8. Alcohol swabs to sterilize instruments or small areas of skin
9. Antibiotic ointment for wounds (not for eyes) (ie. Polysporin, for non puncture type wounds)
10. Contact lens solution or sterile saline packets for rinsing eyes, to clean wounds
11. Cotton swabs (ie. Q-tips)
12. Hibitane - a mild antibacterial soap for cleaning skin, wounds. Betadine can also be used.

13. Sterile cotton or cotton balls
14. Sterile Gauze Pads (the larger 4" size is better since it can easily be cut smaller if necessary)
15. Rolls of gauze or cling gauze bandage(1-2" )
16. Hydrogen Peroxide - 10 ml every 15 minutes to induce vomiting in animals that have ingested a non-caustic poison. (Also useful to remove blood stains)
17. Razor Blade can also be used to shave away hair and abrade the skin following a tick bite.
18. Stockingette to protect bandage on leg or foot.
19. Rubber bulb ear syringe - used for flushing eyes, ears, wounds
20. Forceps and/or tweezers
21. Self-adhesive bandage (ie. Vetrap)
22. Numbers for the Animal Poison Hotline & Poison Control for Pets (800/548-2423 or 900/680-0000 both numbers charge a fee). The National Poison Control Hotlines for humans should also be included.