

Fido 911

First aid is the immediate, temporary care given to a dog until he can be transported to the veterinarian. **Never put yourself at risk to help an injured or sick dog.** Assess the situation and get help from an adult if you cannot safely approach the dog. Even your own dog may require a muzzle to allow you to safely examine and move him if he is painful and scared. Vital signs allow you to assess what is going on inside a dog's body.

Temperature: Don't try this exercise if your dog won't let your veterinarian take his temperature easily. Have your friend or family member restrain your dog in either a standing or lying down position. Put a small amount of Vaseline on the tip of the thermometer. Gently insert the thermometer about an inch into your dog's rectum.

Pulse: This is the same as heart rate. You will need to locate your dog's femoral artery to count a pulse. This artery is located on the inside of the rear legs. Using the tips of your pointer and middle fingers, gently feel a few inches down from the body about in the middle of the leg. You should feel a soft pulsing each time the heart beats. Count each pulsing for 15 seconds and then multiply by four to get how many times the dog's heart beats per minute. A good time to practice taking your dog's pulse is after he has been running and playing and the heart beat is stronger.

Respiration: To get your dog's respiratory rate, watch his chest move out with each breath. Count each breath for 15 seconds and multiply by four to get breaths per minute.

Mucous Membrane Color: You can use your dog's gum or inside of his flews to assess mucous membrane color. Some dog's have black mouths, but most have at least a tiny area that is non-pigmented that you can see pink. Pink is the normal color. Abnormal colors include white, pale pink, blue, yellow, brownish or gray.

Capillary Refill Time: You will use your dog's mucous membrane to evaluate the capillary refill time. Using the tip of your pointer finger, gently press the gum or inside of the flews until the pinkish color turns to white. Pull your finger away and see how long it takes for the pink color to return. You can practice on yourself by squeezing your thumb nail.

Common Emergencies

There are about as many ways for a dog to get injured or sick as there are dogs. Dogs can be hit by vehicles, ingest toxic substances, be bitten or stung by poisonous insects, spiders and reptiles, be electrocuted, and suffer from heat stroke just to name a few. Each one of these emergencies may need your immediate attention to save a life.

Trauma: After a dog has been hit by a moving vehicle, he may have sustained a variety of traumatic injuries. These could include broken bones, severe hemorrhage, head injuries and internal organ damage. Before approaching a dog that has been hit by a vehicle, make sure that the scene is safe for you. If the dog is still in the roadway, make sure that traffic has stopped and remains stopped. Any dog can bite, even your own. Approach any injured dog with caution. Move slowly speaking in a soft soothing tone of voice and before touching the dog apply a muzzle for your safety. See the 4-H website for instruction on how to apply a pressure bandage, deal with shock and how to safely move an injured dog. Photo: Line drawing of a muzzle being applied with instructions.

Ingestion of a toxic substances: Many things that people can eat and medications that they can safely take are poisonous to dogs. Never give a dog a human medication until you have talked with your veterinarian about the specific medication and its possible use in dogs. If your dog has ingested a potentially **toxic** substance, first read on the package to see what first aid should be administered or call your veterinarian or pet poison control. In some cases your veterinarian is the only one equipped to deal with a poison. In that case, immediate transport to the veterinary clinic is crucial. If inducing vomiting is recommended, you can achieve this by giving the dog hydrogen peroxide orally. Start by giving a small dog about a teaspoon full and a larger dog about a tablespoon full. You can continue to give the same amount every five minutes until the dog vomits. Just to let you know, dogs hate the taste of hydrogen peroxide.

Bee Sting: If your dog gets stung by a bee, don't pull the stinger out with your fingers. This can cause more poison to be injected. Instead, rake the stinger out with an object like a card. Watch the dog for any signs of distress or facial swelling. If you see either or both, contact your veterinarian.

Venomous Reptile Bite: Try to identify what bit your dog without getting bitten yourself. Knowing what kind of critter bit will help your veterinarian know how to proceed with treatment. Try to keep the dog calm and don't put an icepack on a bite wound. Transport to your veterinarian for medical treatment.

Electrocution: Never touch a dog that has been electrocuted until the power source has been cut off. Immediate transport to your veterinarian is indicated. **CPR** may be indicated if the dog is not breathing and his heart is not beating. See the 4-H website for instructions on administering CPR.

Heatstroke: If a dog's temperature reaches 104° F or more due to such things as over exertion in hot weather or confinement in a closed, hot environment, first aid is necessary. The dog will collapse, have increased respiratory rate, a very rapid heart rate and severe diarrhea. Your goal is to cool the dog down. First, get him out of the heat. Next, put him in cool water or drape a cold wet towel over him. If his body temperature has reached 104° F, stop the cooling process and transport to the veterinarian immediately.