



Experiencing an animal in distress can be upsetting and difficult to handle, this helpful guide will help you identify when your pet needs help and what to do about it.



## TIP

Your first response should be to call the veterinary clinic in order to explain that your pet is experiencing emergency symptoms. This way, your pet's case will be treated as soon as possible.

In order to help the veterinary clinic with their diagnoses, be ready to supply your veterinary clinic with details that you have noticed as well as when the issue started to appear.

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## INTRODUCTION

It can be quite frightening to see your pet suffering, especially if you are unsure whether the situation should be considered an emergency. When in doubt, always contact your veterinarian or the nearest animal hospital.

To better prepare you here are 10 of the most common pet emergencies found in emergency veterinary hospitals around the country.

## PAIN

Pain can occur in pets for several reasons and can be displayed in a variety of ways. Pacing, agitation, restlessness, panting, rapid heart rate, or even aggression, are all symptoms of possible pain.

Spinal pain can often times be misinterpreted as abdominal pain and vice versa. If your pet is acting in a strange way and you suspect pain, contact a veterinarian immediately.

## DIFFICULTY BREATHING

Laboured breathing or shortness of breath, often called dyspnea, may prevent your pet getting enough oxygen into their bloodstream and is a life-threatening emergency. The causes are varied. One of the most common in older pets is fluid in the lungs or chest cavity.

## SEIZURES

Seizures are episodes of abnormal electrical activity within the brain. They can be triggered by intra-cranial problems (such as epilepsy, brain tumours, or brain swelling) or extra-cranial problems (such as low blood sugar and electrolyte disturbances). Any seizure can be life threatening. Seizures can occur singly or in clusters and can occur at any time and in any frequency. If your pet has a seizure, seek veterinary care as soon as possible.

## DIFFICULTY URINATING

Straining to urinate is a symptom of more than just a urinary tract infection. Many pets will strain to

urinate if they have crystals or stones in their bladder. Inflammation, blood clots, cancer or even stress alone can all cause difficulty urinating. If a pet is straining to, or unable to, pass any urine, it is a life threatening emergency that needs to be addressed by a veterinarian immediately.

### VOMITING AND DIARRHOEA

Vomiting and/or diarrhoea are two of the most common emergencies pets can have. These non-specific gastrointestinal signs could be caused by a primary gastrointestinal problem caused by getting into the garbage or swallowing something causing an obstruction, or by a secondary cause such as metabolic disease, cancer and other diseases.

Dehydration can occur quickly, and depending on the underlying cause, symptoms can drastically worsen in a matter of hours.

### COUGHING AND CHOKING

Choking can be a serious issue even if the symptoms resolve within seconds. Lack of proper oxygenation or the build-up of fluid within the lungs can be dangerous consequence of choking. Coughing is a vague symptom of several possibilities, including viruses, bacteria, fungal pneumonia, allergic bronchitis or even heart failure.

Any compromise in your pet's respiratory ability should be evaluated by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

### BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA

Many pets sustain some sort of blunt force trauma in their life. The external appearance of a pet can be deceiving. Even a minor bump by a reversing car can prove to be life threatening due to internal injury, some of which can take hours to become apparent.

If your pet has sustained any sort of blunt force trauma seek veterinary care right away.

### TOXIN INGESTION

Pets are curious about their environment and sometimes this can get them into trouble. Toxins can be ingested, absorbed across the skin, or inhaled. Pesticides are extremely common toxins in pets but so are several household materials such as cleaners, medications, plants, batteries, antifreeze, insecticides, paint, fertilisers and some foods including chocolate, grapes, onions and xylitol containing products such as sugar-free gums.

If you suspect your pet has been poisoned, immediate veterinary care can make all the difference.

### ALLERGIC REACTIONS

Pets can commonly develop allergic reactions. Causes of these reactions range from vaccine sensitivity to insect bites. Symptoms generally include facial swelling, hives, and itchiness but may also include profuse vomiting and diarrhoea, lethargy, or difficulty breathing.

Timely veterinary care is vital if you suspect an allergic reaction in your pet.

### BITE WOUNDS

This is just as common in both cats and dogs and can cause a variety of issues. Although a bite wound may appear small, the damage to the underlying tissues is usually much more extensive. Bites tear the layers of skin, fat, and muscle apart creating a pocket of air usually seeded with infection. In some cases, penetration into the chest or abdominal cavity can become life threatening.

Veterinary care is essential with any bite wound despite how minor it may appear on the surface.

### FOR ANY SUSPECTED ANIMAL EMERGENCIES, CALL YOUR VETERINARY CLINIC WITHOUT ANY FURTHER DELAY!

Your first response should be to call the veterinary clinic in order to explain that your pet is experiencing emergency symptoms. This way, your pet's case will be treated as soon as possible.

In order to help the veterinary clinic with their diagnoses, please supply your veterinary clinic with details that you have

noticed as well as when the issue started to appear.

In the absence of your usual veterinary clinic or if it is outside of business hours, do not hesitate to call an animal emergency clinic. Make sure to always have details of animal emergency facilities so that they're at hand in a time of high stress. For more advice contact the team at The Lost Dogs Home Veterinary Hospital on (03) 8379 4498 or [vetclinic@dogshome.com](mailto:vetclinic@dogshome.com)



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