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Basic Veterinary First Aid

Medical emergencies can happen anytime, anywhere, and always when we least expect it. Knowing some basic first aid techniques for your pets are definitely not a substitute for taking your pet to a veterinary clinic, but can be useful to help stabilize your pet until you can take them to receive proper care. Below are some common emergent situations and what you can do to help your pet until it can receive treatment.

Some Common Emergencies

External Bleeding Wounds: Apply pressure using gauze or a washcloth directly over the wound. Depending on the location of the wound and how deep the injury is, a large amount of pressure may be needed. It can take several minutes for blood to clot, and removing the gauze may accidentally disturb the clot; therefore, remove the gauze and pressure as few times as possible.

Heat Stroke: If your pet is in a warm vehicle, take your pet out of the car and into a cooler, shaded spot out of direct sunlight (or inside if possible). Place a cool, damp washcloth on your pet's head, neck, and feet (do not cover your pet's nose or mouth with the towel!) You can also pour cool (not cold!) water over your pet's body to help stabilize its temperature.

Hypothermia: Bring your pet inside or in a warm area, if possible. Cover your pet in blankets (foil blankets are the best at retaining heat, if available). Place warm water bottles or socks filled with warm rice to help slowly increase your pet's core body temperature. Do not put your pet into warm water, as the sudden temperature change can actually damage tissues exhibiting frostbite.

Seizures: Keep your pet away from large pieces of furniture and stairs. Keep the surrounding environment as dark as possible. If you can, put a blanket underneath your pet's head (but only if it is safe to do so – do not get bit!) Make sure to time the seizure (normally, seizures last for 2-3 minutes or less). After a seizure, your pet may still be disoriented for a few hours, and can rarely be more irritable or even aggressive. Be careful!

No Heartbeat: Depending on what the cause is, check your pet for any obstruction to its airway first, as well as for signs of breathing.

- Lay your pet on their side with the right side down. Using both hands with the fingers crossed and the palms facing downwards, press on the chest just behind the left elbow.
- For medium-sized dogs, aim for around 100 compressions per minute. Larger dogs need fewer chest compressions per minute (closer to 60-80), while smaller dogs and cats need more compressions per minute (up to 150).
- For small dogs and cats, cradle your pet's chest into your hand, with your thumb on the left side of the chest and the rest of your fingers on the right side. Compress your pet's chest by squeezing your hand together.



Again, all of the above conditions do require trips to the veterinarian.

However, these tips can help keep your pet as stable as possible until you can get your pet to a clinic!

Best regards,
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