



Pet Emergencies: Signs Your Pet Needs Immediate Care

Emergencies: When Your Pet Needs Help

As a pet owner, you know your cat or dog better than anyone. If something feels wrong—if your pet isn't acting like themselves—it's always better to call and ask than to worry at home. We'd rather hear from you when you're unsure than have a small concern turn into a serious problem. This guide covers some of the situations where your pet may need immediate veterinary care, and common household dangers to watch out for.

When Your Pet Needs Emergency Care

Some situations require urgent veterinary attention. If your pet is experiencing any of the following, contact us or an emergency vet clinic right away:

- Difficulty breathing, wheezing, or unusual gasping
- Loss of consciousness or collapse
- Uncontrollable bleeding or severe bleeding from any orifice
- Signs of extreme pain (crying, aggression, reluctance to move)
- Inability to urinate or defecate, or straining without producing anything
- Suspected poisoning or toxin ingestion
- Eye trauma or sudden loss of vision
- Inability to stand or use back legs
- Seizures or convulsions
- Severe trauma from a car accident, fall, or attack

Vomiting and Diarrhea: When to Call

Occasional vomiting or diarrhea can happen, especially if a pet eats something unfamiliar. However, contact us or seek emergency care if your pet:

- Has vomited or had diarrhea for more than a few hours, or several times in succession
- Is vomiting and unable to keep water or food down
- Has blood in their vomit or stool
- Shows signs of abdominal pain (hunched posture, yelping, restlessness)
- Is unusually lethargic or unresponsive alongside digestive upset
- Is a young kitten or puppy (they dehydrate quickly)

Mild vomiting or diarrhea may resolve on its own, but if it lasts more than a few hours or you're worried, there's no harm in calling us to discuss whether your pet should be seen. Dehydration can become serious fast, especially in young or elderly pets.

Common Household Toxins

Many everyday items in our homes can be dangerous or fatal to cats and dogs. Keep these substances out of reach, and if your pet ingests any of them, contact us or Poison Control immediately:



Pet Emergencies: Signs Your Pet Needs Immediate Care

- **Chocolate** – especially dark chocolate and baking chocolate; can cause vomiting, diarrhea, and heart problems
- **Grapes and raisins** – even small amounts can cause kidney failure in dogs; avoid completely
- **Onions and garlic** – found in many human foods, they damage red blood cells in cats and dogs
- **Xylitol** – a sweetener in sugar-free gum, candy, and some peanut butters; causes rapid insulin release and low blood sugar
- **Avocado** – contains a toxin that causes vomiting, diarrhea, and heart issues
- **Alcohol** – even small amounts can cause intoxication and dangerously low blood sugar
- **Medications (human)** – pain relievers, allergy pills, antidepressants, and many others are toxic; store safely out of reach
- **Pesticides and rat poison** – extremely dangerous; store in locked cabinets
- **Household cleaners and chemicals** – including antifreeze, pool chemicals, and fertilizers
- **Plants** – lilies, sago palms, dieffenbachia, and many ornamental plants are toxic; lilies are especially dangerous for cats
- **Essential oils** – some oils can poison cats and dogs; use with caution and ensure good ventilation
- **Macadamia nuts** – toxic to dogs, causing weakness and tremors

If your pet eats something you're unsure about, don't wait to see if they get sick. Call us right away with a description of what they ate and how much, if possible. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center also offers 24/7 guidance at 888-426-4435 (charges may apply).

Other Urgent Warning Signs

Beyond the situations above, certain changes in your pet's behavior or appearance warrant prompt attention:

- Any difficulty breathing or rapid, shallow breathing
- Pale or blue-tinged gums
- Severe lethargy or unresponsiveness
- Sudden blindness or eye changes
- Drooling excessively or inability to swallow
- Extreme agitation or unusual aggression
- Fever or feeling very hot to the touch

Trust Your Instincts

You are your pet's best advocate. If something doesn't feel right, contact us. Whether it's a late-night worry or a Sunday afternoon concern, we'd rather discuss your pet's health than have you second-guess yourself. Call 1-609-426-0155 during business hours, and ask about after-hours options if your concern occurs when we're closed. Our team is here to help.