

# All About Pets

*The national pet care information service*



## BASIC FIRST AID



THE BLUE CROSS

*Britain's pet charity*

## Is it an emergency?

The best way to find out is to phone your vet – don't rush straight to the practice, as the vet may not be there.

Listen to the answerphone and have a pen and paper ready in case you are given another number to ring. Be sure to give a full account of what has happened. All vets are obliged to offer a 24-hour service for life threatening emergencies.

If your pet is hurt, do not give food, drink or any human medicines. Many, especially aspirin and paracetamol, are poisonous to cats.

## Road accidents or falls

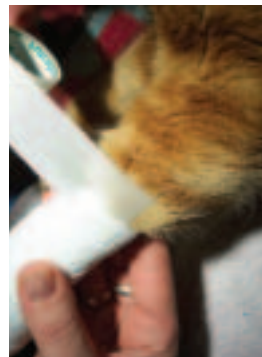
Contact the vet immediately. Try to keep calm and mind the traffic yourself! An injured pet will be frightened and in pain, so even a friendly animal may bite. Approach slowly and talk soothingly. Use a thick towel to pick up your pet to avoid being bitten or scratched. If your pet cannot move, slide it gently onto a coat or a towel to use as a stretcher. Use a cat carrier for transport to the vet as an injured cat may panic and be difficult to restrain. Keep the patient warm.

Internal injuries may not be obvious until some time afterwards. Revisit the vet if your pet is not eating 24 hours after the injury, or if he is dull and reluctant to move, vomiting, not urinating or experiencing breathing difficulties.



## Bleeding

Apply a bandage or hold a thick pad over the wound – keep it there as removal may dislodge any blood clot. Contact the vet.



## Broken leg

Don't touch. Keep your pet confined and phone the vet.

## Applying a bandage

Put a non-adhesive dressing on the wound and cover with several layers of swabs, followed by a layer of cotton wool. Wrap several layers of open weave bandage over this, tightly enough to lightly compress the cotton wool. Stick this to the hair at the top with surgical tape. Cover the whole with a firm (but not excessively tight) layer of crepe or self-adhesive elastic bandage. Do not leave on more than 24 hours.



## Burns and scalds

Wash for at least five minutes in cool water. Wrap the patient up warmly for transport to the surgery to avoid chilling.

## Electric shock

Turn off the appliance and pull the animal away, or if this is not possible use a non-metallic dry object (such as a broom handle) to move the animal. Wrap your pet up warmly and get it to the vet. Attempt artificial respiration if breathing has stopped (see below).

## Coat contamination

Cats may make themselves ill by licking chemicals like paint or creosote off their coat. Prevent further licking with an Elizabethan collar or wrap the cat in a towel. Wash off small amounts of chemicals with water (not turpentine or white spirit which are poisonous) or clip affected hair. Otherwise take your pet to a vet straightaway.



## **My cat's just not itself...**

If your pet is lying down continuously, barely moving and uninterested in anything, it's wise to consult the vet. Many different things, from the trivial to the life-threatening can be the cause; only the vet can tell.

## **My cat keeps going to its litter tray and crying...**

Passing small amounts of urine, or no urine at all, suggests bladder irritation (or cystitis). Such signs can be serious in male cats and indicate an obstruction. See the vet immediately. Constipation is less serious but seek advice within 24 hours.

## **There's a cut that is oozing bloody, smelly fluid...**

Part the fur to examine. A small hole that is oozing smelly pus suggests an abscess from a bite. See a vet within 24 hours or sooner if your pet is very unwell.

## **My cat is breathing very fast...**

If your cat also seems dull and doesn't want to eat, take this very seriously. Phone the vet. Handle your pet gently – in this situation, stress can kill.

## Vomiting and diarrhoea

Frequent vomiting, especially in the young (less than two years) or old (over ten years) is potentially an emergency. Phone the vet. Diarrhoea without vomiting is less serious. Feed a light diet (boiled chicken or white fish) in small quantities. See a vet if the condition persists more than two days, or within 24 hours if the diarrhoea is frequent.

## I think my cat is having a fit...

Keep calm and remove things that might injure your cat. Darken the room and keep it quiet. Phone the vet.

## My cat has eaten my tablets

Contact the vet immediately. Have any packaging to hand so that you can tell the vet exactly what is in them. Don't make your pet sick without asking the vet.

## Sore eyes

Bathe with warm water and use an Elizabethan collar to prevent your cat rubbing its eyes. If the eye is completely closed, consult a vet as soon as possible.

## Basic first aid kit

- One roll of crepe bandage or self-adhesive bandage 5cm width
- One roll of conforming/open-weave bandage 2.5cm width
- Adhesive surgical tape 1.5cm width
- 100g box of cotton wool
- Box of sterile white absorbent gauze
- Two packets of non-adhesive absorbent dressing material (approx. 5cm x 5cm) such as 'melolin' that can be applied as a first layer in contact to any open wound
- Blunt ended scissors
- A thick towel
- An Elizabethan collar



## Artificial respiration

If the animal isn't breathing, pull the tongue forward (avoid getting bitten) and check for obstructions. Then extend the neck, so the chin points forwards, close the mouth and blow down the nose once every two seconds.

If you cannot feel a heartbeat, apply gentle intermittent pressure to the lower chest just behind the front legs twice a second. Recovery is unlikely if breathing does not restart after three minutes.

## Further information

For further information and advice on caring for your pet or horse visit [www.allaboutpets.org.uk](http://www.allaboutpets.org.uk), the national pet care information service. Alternatively, you can write to us at the address below to request a list of available leaflets.

All About Pets is provided by The Blue Cross, Britain's pet charity. We rely entirely on your support to enable us to continue our vital work. Any contribution would be most welcome. Thank you.



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