

EMERGENCIES AND FIRST AID

What kinds of emergencies might occur?

There are many possible emergencies from automobile injury, to acute internal problems such as an intestinal blockage, but the following are the most serious and require immediate attention:

- Any severe difficulty in breathing
- Cardiac failure
- Massive hemorrhage
- Profound shock from any cause
- Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reactions)
- Penetrating wounds of the thorax (chest) or abdomen
- Coma and loss of consciousness
- Poisoning
- Massive injuries to the body
- Seizures
- Burns and scalds
- Heat stroke
- Bites and fight wounds
- Continuous vomiting and/or diarrhea

What can I do while getting veterinary help?

- 1) Keep calm.
- 2) Contact the veterinary hospital, appraise them of the situation and get first aid advice.
- 3) Keep your cat warm, as quiet as possible, and keep movement to a minimum if there is possible trauma, broken limbs, etc.

- 4) For specific aid refer to the following table.
- 5) Obtain a suitable container such as a strong cardboard box. Drop a blanket or thick towel over the patient. Tuck it in carefully or maneuver the cat onto the blanket so it can be gently placed in the cardboard box or directly into your car.
- 6) Get to a veterinary hospital as soon as possible, but drive carefully!

Emergency Situation — Action

Automobile injury — Make sure your cat has a clear airway, but do not put your hand in its mouth if your cat is conscious. Cover wounds with the material available. Handle your cat with care, supporting its body as much as possible. Carry it in a basket, box, or cage to the veterinary hospital.

Bleeding (hemorrhage) — If hemorrhage is severe on a limb, apply a tourniquet above the wound just tight enough to significantly reduce flow of blood; it has to be loosened within 20 minutes. Apply a pad of cotton or wool over a gauze dressing to the wound or bleeding point and bandage it firmly and/or simply apply direct pressure.

Seizures — Prevent your cat from injuring itself. Do not put your hand in its mouth. Keep your cat as quiet as possible and prevent it from falling.

Burns and — Cool the burned area with cool water by running water over it or cover it with wet towels. This also helps remove caustic substances (acid or alkaline) if these are the cause. If loss of skin occurs, cover the area with the cleanest material available.

Heat stroke — Place your cat in a tub of cool water. When you are ready to transport (cats left in a car in summer with no ventilation; excessive heat; or obvious distress) wrap it in a cool, wet towel. You may place the cat and the towel in a plastic bag to prevent getting your car panting and obvious distress) wet.

Hemorrhagic gastroenteritis — Seek veterinary attention. This is a serious condition. (diarrhea with blood; with or without vomiting).

Bites, fight wounds — Clean with cool water and seek veterinary attention.

Poisons — Induce vomiting with 5 mL (1 teaspoon) of hydrogen peroxide orally or a teaspoon of salt placed in mouth. Keep a sample of the vomit for testing. **DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING** if your cat has ingested products. If corrosive or toxic material is on the skin, wash it profusely. Bring a sample of the suspected poison with its container to the veterinary hospital.

Eye injury — If the cornea is penetrated or perforated it will be very painful. Prevent your cat from scratching at its eye and doing further damage. If the eyeball is out of its socket keep it moist with saline solution (e.g. contact lens solution) and protect it from direct injury. Seek veterinary help immediately.

Shock (see below) — Keep your cat warm and quiet. Seek immediate veterinary help.

What is shock?

Shock has many definitions. It is a complex body reaction to a number of situations. These include acute loss of blood volume such as hemorrhage, heart failure and other causes of decreased circulation (e.g. severe and sudden allergic reaction and heat stroke). If not treated quickly and effectively shock may cause irreversible injury to body cells, and it can be rapidly fatal.

How do I recognize shock?

Signs include rapid breathing which may be noisy, rapid heart rate with a weak pulse, pale (possibly even white) mucous membranes (for instance gums, lips, under eyelids) and severe depression (listlessness) and cool extremities (limbs and ears). The cat may vomit.

What should I do?

Seek veterinary help immediately. Keep the cat warm and quiet.