



# O A K B A Y A N I M A L H O S P I T A L

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## 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
- Eclampsia (milk fever)
- Hemorrhagic gastroenteritis (watery, bloody diarrhea)
- Bloat (gastric dilation)

### *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 dog 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 dog 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 dog has a clear airway, but do not put your hand in its mouth if your dog is conscious. Cover wounds with the cleanest material available.

Handle your dog 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 dog from injuring itself. Do not put your hand in its mouth. Keep your dog as quiet as possible and prevent it from falling. Keeping it the dark will allow it to recover as smoothly as possible.

**Burns and scalds** — 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.

**Eclampsia (milk fever)** - (usually seen in bitches 3-5 weeks after whelping: excessive panting, wild eyes, muscle spasms and weakness, seizures — Remove your dog from her puppies to prevent further nursing. Call your veterinarian immediately. This is easily treated, but it can be fatal if it is not treated immediately.

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

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

**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 the mouth. Keep a sample of the vomit for testing. **DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING** if your dog has ingested corrosive material such as strong acid, alkali, or petroleum-based 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 dog 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 dog 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 dog may vomit.

### **What should I do?**

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