



WHEN *NOT*  
TO GO TO  
YOUR VET

**DR. RUTH ROBERTS**  
**YOUR PET'S ALLY**



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## **When Do You Need to Go to the ER Vet?**

Before you drop everything you are doing to take your pet to the ER Vet, there are some things you can do at home. What's your local ER Vet number? Your Vet's after hours number? Put these in your phone. Call ER before you come so they know you are headed their way, and can prepare for a major issue, and if they are backed up, can let you know ahead of time, and may be able to make additional suggestions to help you at home.

The following are issues that need immediate attention from a veterinarian.

1. **Struggling to breathe.** This can present with blue gums, pink liquid coming from the mouth, stretching their neck or head, or panting heavily.

- heart disease
- asthma
- Pneumonia

2. **Coughing constantly and unable to rest.**

- heart disease
- Bacterial infection or flu
- tracheal problem

3. **Distended stomach and bloating.**

- bloat
- intestinal obstruction



#### **4. Whimpering in pain.**

- This means your pet probably has a pain score of greater than 7

#### **5. Yellow gums (jaundiced).**

- Liver disease
- Hemolysis - rupture of red cells

#### **6. Dragging legs or struggling to walk.**

- Severe pain from arthritis
- Intervertebral disk disease
- Fibrocartilagenous embolism

#### **7. Falling down or collapse.**

- Heart disease
- Seizure
- Profound pain
- Disk disease

#### **8. Seizures or trembling.**

#### **9. Uncontrolled vomiting &/or Diarrhea**

#### **10. Trauma**

- hit by car
- attacked by another dog
- Protect yourself if your pet is super painful with a quick muzzle made by a slip lead. Put around your dogs neck, then make a loop to go around the muzzle, and gently tighten, and secure to loop on neck.
- Protect big open wounds as best as possible with a gentle bandage. Use a piece of plywood under you pet to help support them if there are broken bones.



Let's talk about how to quickly assess whether your pet is stable. The following are basic vital signs your vet probably checks each time they do an exam. Every Pet is different, hence the ranges. Smaller pets tend to have higher respiratory & heart rates, so I recommend you find out what is normal for your pet now. Write it down somewhere you can find it! Print this out, and put on the refrigerator. Write each of your pet's vitals down.

### **Respiratory rate, or Breathing Rate -**

At rest, this should be 15-30 Breaths per minute, or 1 breath every 2-4 seconds. Obviously this will be higher if your pet has been exercising. Easiest way to do this is to get a clock with second hand, or set your timer for 15 seconds and count the number of times your pet's chest rises - this is the in breath. Take the number of breaths per 15 seconds and Multiply by 4 - this will give you breaths per minute.

### **Heart Rate 60 - 140 BPM -**

Bigger dogs have slower heart rates, smaller dogs have faster ones. There are several places to take your pet's pulse. The femoral artery can be found between your pet's tummy and the inside of the rear leg, close to where they meet. The heart can be felt with light pressure at the point of the chest, and in some lightly haired breeds, it can actually be seen. You can also feel pulses on the back of the front and back legs, just above the feet, just where we have our pulses taken. Again, set your timer for 15 seconds. Count the number of beats in that time and multiply by 4 to get the heart rate.



## **Temperature**

Pets can have fever, and low temperature can also indicate problems. Normal temp is 101.5, but it can range from 100- 102.5. The most accurate way to take a temperature is with a digital thermometer inserted rectally. Buy the fastest digital thermometer you can find! Many take less than 15 secs to give you a reading, some take a minute. Use Lube, or cooking oil for comfort!!! If you are by yourself, this can be difficult. You can take the temp under the armpit, but realize it will be low by about 2 degrees. So if the temp says 102 from the armpit, that means it may be 104, which is very high!

## **Mucous Membranes**

a quick way to make sure your pet is not shocky or dehydrate is to flip the lip - the color on the gums should be a nice healthy pink to red, and the gums should be slick to the touch. Blue gums means oxygen is not getting where it needs to, Brick red can mean heat stroke. Pale gums may mean your pet is loosing blood internally, or is anemic. When you press the gums lightly, the color should come back in 1-2 seconds.

Things you may be able to manage at home:

### **1. Restlessness or unusual anxiety.**

- what's going on outside - storms? Construction?
- Benedryl, Liquid nutritional
- If it persists, can be a sign of neurologic issues or seizures.



## **2. Fever.**

- If low grade - likely ok to wait till your vet opens, if your pet is reasonably alert.
- if high, go to ER

## **3. Discharge from the vagina or penis**

- small amount is normal for male dogs.
- small amount from Spayed female may indicate vaginal fold infection, or vaginitis
- Urine dribbling can indicate obstruction - esp if you saw your pet straining earlier then stopped, & they look uncomfortable.
- Large amount of discharge from Intact male or female can indicate serious infections,

## **4. Unusual odor.**

- can indicate skin infection, ear infection,
- Abscess Clean with warm water & apply Epsom salt compress.

## **5. Lethargic.**

- Did your pet over exert the day before?
- Is your pet able to respond to you normally?
- Is your pet eating
- Is your pet drinking?

## **6. Bee sting**

- Small welts and your pet is looking at you funny, use benedryl as below. It will take 20-30 minutes to kick in, and you can apply ice/ Gel packs to help alleviate the discomfort.
- Your pet's whole face swells up, and you've never dealt with this before. Pop the bendryl in and go.



## **7. Vomiting**

- First 1- 2 times - pull up the water & food. Wait 3 hours and if no further issues, offer ice chips or a small (1/8 to 1/2 cup) amount of water. If no further issues, allow free access to water, but wait to offer food for 12 hours. Offer clay or charcoal in just enough food to get the meds down around 6 hours.
- Vomiting multiple times, even with no access to water? Go!

## **8. Diarrhea**

- 1-3 episodes with no blood in stool - Offer small amounts (1/4 of normal meal size) of boiled potatoes, turnips and add clay or charcoal. Mix in probiotics 2 hours away from clay/ charcoal. Gradually add in bland proteins like boiled hamburger or chicken, and then switch back to regular food after 2-3 days.
- Blood in stool or episodes of diarrhea every 1-2 hours?

## **9. Ear infections**

Warp your pets ears behind it's head to prevent Ear Hematomas if shaking constantly

- Use topical pain medicine to improve comfort to help get through the next day. Do not try to clean as they may be very painful.

[Click Here!](#)



## 10. Ate something bad - chocolate, tons of raisins, rat poison.

- Break out the peroxide baby!
- If you know how much your pet ate, and you are confident that your pet vomited it all back up, rest easy.
- If you are not sure, take any packaging with you to the ER, and also what your pet has vomited up.
- Some pets will not vomit with peroxide and require prescription medications. If your pet has not vomited in 20-30 mins and is looking at you like, can I have more? and not drooling, time to go.
- If your pet ate something sharp (ie bones), DO NOT Induce vomiting!

## 11. Eye irritation

- Use simulsan drops if there is conjunctivitis present, to flush out the eye and soothe. Put cone on to prevent your pet from irritating it further
- if there is corneal irritation, ( a cut on the clear part of the eye, white spot), or a thorn in the eye, put cone on & go.

### Your at home first aid kit:

- [Charcoal](#) 1/2 to 2 caps per meal depending on your pets size
- [bentonite](#) clay - 1/2 to 2 tsps per meal
- [Benadryl 25 mg capsules](#)  
1 TAB 2 times a day for up to 25 #  
2 TABS 2 times a day up to 50#  
3 TABS 2 times a day up to 75#



- **Bandage materials**  
Check toes if you are leaving on overnight!
- [Self Adherent Wraps](#)
- [Gauze squares](#)
- [cloth tape](#)  
must be sticky! Duct tape works in a pinch.
- [Topical steroid](#) like hydrocortizone
- **Hydrogen Peroxide & 10 cc syringe**  
Up to 25 # Start with 10 cc syringeful, and redose up to 2 times,  
10 mins apart | 25-50 # 2 syringe fulls, redose up to 2 times
- **Cone of shame**
- [Probiotics](#)  
use for diarrhea and for 2 weeks following any course of antibiotics.
- **Slip lead**
- [Homeopathic eye drops & ear drops](#)
- [Arnica gel](#)  
for painful areas that DO NOT have open wounds- alcohol - oww!
- **Plain old petroleum jelly, or [bacitracin](#)**  
type product with lidocaine.  
*\* Do not use in open wounds - for cuts & scrapes.*
- [Traumeel](#) or arnica based tablets for pain
- [Freezer gel packs](#)
- [Epsom salts](#) Use for compresses, and sore backs.  
*\* Do not use on open wounds.*
- **YunnBai Yao for bleeding**  
an emergency pill for severe issues, 1 cup up to 25 pounds,  
2 caps 25-50 pounds and head to ER.

