

Dog First Aid: Essential Items for Your Pet's First Aid Kit

It was a normal day. I started getting ready for work and my dogs were just laying around. I went to have a shower and when I came out, to my horror, my dog had somehow found a bottle of ibuprofen and ingested some. Having recently completed a pet first aid course, I knew that this was a life-threatening event! I grabbed my dog and got her into the car while dialing my veterinarian's office. I couldn't reach anyone, so my next call was to the emergency hospital. Fortunately, I had both numbers saved in my phone. While I was on route, I finally reached someone. They confirmed that yes, I needed to bring her in immediately. My quick action and that of the veterinary staff at the hospital ensured that my dog was able to live a long life without any detrimental effects from the ibuprofen.

In a separate incident, another one of my dogs ran outside and collided with a metal garden trailer my father had left on the patio. The dog came inside having shaved off a layer of his skin from the side of his leg. He was bleeding profusely. I grabbed my pet first aid kit where I had the supplies to temporarily cover the area and stop the bleeding while I got him to the vet.

These events reminded me how quickly things can happen. Our furry friends are curious and adventurous, which means accidents can happen! Knowing what to do and having a well-stocked pet first aid kit at home is essential for handling minor injuries and emergencies until you can reach a veterinarian. Here's what every pet owner should include in their kit:

Basic First Aid Supplies

- **Sterile gauze pads and bandages** – For covering wounds and stopping bleeding. A woman's sanitary napkin is ideal for protecting a wound and absorbing any blood without sticking to the dog's fur or the wound itself.
- **Vet wrap** – This adhesive type of tape can be used to secure bandages without sticking to fur. This can be obtained from your veterinarian, online or a pet supply store.
- **Tape** - This is necessary in the event you need to secure pads or gauze to a wound to prepare for transport
- **Cotton pads, balls and swabs** – Useful for cleaning wounds or applying medication.
- **Tweezers/Tick Remover** – Handy for removing splinters, ticks, or debris.
- **Scissors (blunt-tipped)** – For safely cutting bandages or gauze.

Medications & Treatments

- **Hydrogen peroxide (3%)** – This very common fluid available at any pharmacy can be used to clean wounds, act as an antiseptic and, if directed by a veterinarian, can be used to induce vomiting.

- **Benadryl** – For allergic reactions or insect bites. It is best to consult your veterinarian in advance to determine how much Benadryl should be given to your animal. Mark the bottle with the dosage recommendation so, in a future emergency, you do not have to call your vet.
- **Saline solution** – Useful for rinsing wounds or clearing eyes. You can obtain some from your veterinarian or keep eye flushing solution on hand.
- **Styptic powder or pencil** – Helps stop bleeding from minor cuts or torn nails.

Additional Essentials

- **Gloves (latex or nitrile)** – Protects both you and your pet when handling injuries.
- **Muzzle (soft or emergency type)** – Even the sweetest dog may bite when in pain. At Unified K9 we instruct all our clients to play muzzle conditioning games that condition dogs to stick their noses in things, in preparation for the day where a muzzle may be required. During an emergency, your pet is already in distress, and this simple activity will minimize their stress if they are already accustomed to having something around their muzzle.
- **Emergency contact list** – Keep your vet's number, the numbers to your veterinary emergency hospital and an animal poison control hotline handy. If you suspect your pet has ingested poison and you're unsure of the correct protocol, the poison control hotline can assist you with any emergency actions you may need to take before you can get your pet to a veterinarian.

First Aid Know-How

Beyond having the right supplies, knowing how to use them is key. Consider taking a pet first aid class or keeping a first aid guide for reference. Recognizing signs of distress, treating wounds properly, and knowing when to seek professional help can make all the difference in an emergency. There are several pet first aid teaching organisations that run workshops - such as [Walks 'N' Wags](#), The [Canadian Red Cross](#), and others. Each has their own website, where you can find out about upcoming classes. If you can not find a first aid course near you, these organizations offer online course options as well.

A well-prepared pet owner is a responsible one - keeping a first aid kit stocked and ready ensures you can handle unexpected situations with confidence!



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