

Do You Know These 19 Signs That Scream 'Emergency Care Now!'?

There can be a fine line between what's treatable at home and what is best left to a vet's care. Learn four conditions that may require a visit. Plus 19 medical conditions and signs that could be so serious that aren't negotiable. Get urgent care right now if any of these symptoms arise.

Reviewed by **Dr. Becker**

STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- Dogs and cats are masters at hiding symptoms of illness, so if your pet is showing signs of weakness or minor pain, for instance, there's a good chance the symptoms are worse than she's letting on
- Eye or vision problems, symptoms of bloat, fractured bones and heat stress are examples of medical conditions that require immediate veterinary attention
- Mild vomiting and diarrhea, a bee sting, minor allergic reaction, and minor cuts and scrapes can often be safely dealt with at home
- Itchy, inflamed or irritated paws can often be soothed by giving your pet a foot soak
- There are 19 medical conditions, symptoms and scenarios that warrant emergency veterinary attention, listed in this article

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If your pet becomes ill or injured, it can be difficult to determine what can be safely taken care of at home and what requires a trip to your veterinarian.

You don't want to put your pet through the stress of visiting the vet unnecessarily (not to mention the cost), but you also want to be sure your pet gets veterinary attention if she needs it.

Keep in mind that dogs and cats are masters at hiding symptoms of illness. This is an instinctual behavior that would have helped them to survive in the wild. So if your pet is showing signs of weakness or minor pain, there's a good chance the symptoms are worse than she's letting on.

It's always best to err on the side of caution. If you're in doubt, take your pet in to be checked out. Regular wellness visits will also help you and your veterinarian to know what's normal and what's not for your pet, as well as whether existing health conditions are worsening or improving.

Four Health Conditions — When to Call Your Vet

Since your pet can't tell you whether she needs to see a veterinarian or not, you'll need to be a bit of a detective. Following are four health conditions you may notice in your pet, along with advice on whether or not to seek veterinary care.

1. **Eye problems** — If you notice any changes in your pet's eyes or vision, you'll want to call your veterinarian and schedule an appointment to get them checked out as soon as possible. Eye problems may include injuries, such as a scratch, eyelid or eyelash problems, chronic diseases like glaucoma and more.
2. **Vomiting and diarrhea** — Mild vomiting and diarrhea can be dealt with at home, provided they resolve quickly and your pet is not lethargic or showing other signs of illness. If vomiting and diarrhea continue for more than 24 hours, you'll want to seek veterinary care.

For mild diarrhea, offer a teaspoon of pumpkin for every 10 pounds of body weight, one to two times a day, either in your pet's regular diet, bland diet or as a treat (this also works to relieve constipation and hairballs in cats).

3. **Bloat** — If your dog has simple bloat, or gastric dilatation, her stomach has filled up with gas and air.

In gastric dilatation volvulus (GDV), which is often referred to as bloat as well, the bloated stomach twists around on itself, squeezing off the blood supply to internal organs — a life-threatening condition that requires immediate veterinary care.

Symptoms include a bloated stomach, retching and drooling. If you notice these symptoms, get your pet to an emergency veterinary facility.

4. **Allergic reactions** — Minor allergic reactions to insect bites or stings, food, vaccinations or medications can typically be dealt with at home. Your pet may experience minor swelling, hives or itching. If your pet is having trouble breathing or seems uncomfortable, seek veterinary care right away.

If your pet has a vaccine reaction, make sure to ask your holistic vet for a vaccine detox, and do not continue to vaccinate your pet (ask for titers in place of vaccines).

For a mild allergic reaction to a bee sting, offer homeopathic Apis mel, quercetin or Benadryl if the swelling is not being controlled by natural methods. Serious allergic reactions require an immediate visit to your veterinarian or the closest emergency veterinary clinic.

If your pet's allergic symptoms are chronic, consult with a holistic veterinarian who can help you get to the bottom of what's causing your pet's allergies, as well as develop a natural treatment plan for relief.

19 Medical Conditions That Require Emergency Care

For some medical issues, like mild diarrhea or a minor skin irritation, you can wait to see your veterinarian until the next day. In other cases, waiting isn't an option, as it could put your pet's life at risk.

The 19 medical conditions, symptoms and scenarios that follow also warrant emergency veterinary attention.¹ This is not an all-inclusive list, but if you notice any of the following, get your pet to an emergency veterinary clinic immediately.

- Severe bleeding or bleeding that doesn't stop within five minutes
- Choking, difficulty breathing or nonstop coughing, and gagging
- Bleeding from nose, mouth, rectum, coughing up blood, or blood in urine
- Inability to urinate or pass feces (stool), or obvious pain associated with urinating or passing stool
- Injuries to your pet's eye(s)
- You suspect or know your pet has eaten something poisonous (such as antifreeze, xylitol, chocolate, rodent poison, etc.)
- Seizures and/or staggering
- Fractured bones, severe lameness or inability to move leg(s)
- Obvious signs of pain or extreme anxiety
- Heat stress or heatstroke
- Severe vomiting or diarrhea — more than two episodes in a 24-hour period, or either of these combined with obvious illness or any of the other problems listed here
- Refusal to drink for 24 hours or more
- Unconsciousness
- Penetrating wounds to the chest, including deep lacerations or punctures
- A fever over 104 degrees Fahrenheit (40 degrees Celsius) with profound lethargy
- Bulging eyes and sudden blindness
- Burns or injuries in which a bone is exposed
- Loss of balance (inability to right herself or falls over due to inability to maintain balance)
- Symptoms of bloat, including a very distended abdomen, unproductive belching, retching or vomiting, abdominal pain, restlessness, shallow, rapid breathing and pale gums

First-Aid Tricks to Care for Your Pet at Home

At the other end of the spectrum from conditions requiring emergency care are those you can safely care for at home. These include:

- **Minor nail bleeding** — If your pet snags a nail on the carpet or you clip one too short while trimming her nails, dip her nail in styptic powder to stop the bleeding. You can also use cornstarch or flour; simply pour some in a bowl, dip her nail in and apply constant pressure (usually one to five minutes) until the bleeding stops.
- **Minor cuts and scrapes** — Use contact lens saline solution to clean dirt and debris from a cut or scrape on your pet. You can also use this solution to flush sand or other debris from her eyes. Disinfect daily with dilute Betadine (povidone iodine solution) and apply colloidal silver, calendula tincture or Manuka honey to superficial abrasions until healed.
- **Foot soaks** — Itchy, inflamed or irritated paws can often be soothed by giving your pet a foot soak. Soak her paws in a solution of water mixed with povidone iodine (brand name Betadine) — add enough iodine to turn the water the color of iced tea.

This will safely disinfect and soothe your pet's paws while removing irritants. Be aware that this solution may stain white fur a darker shade.

When you're between veterinary visits, you can also keep a close eye on your pet's health by conducting at-home physical exams regularly. If you notice any unusual lumps, sores, or areas that seem painful, make an appointment to have them checked out by your veterinarian.

Sources and References

[Pet Place September 23, 2014 \(Archived\)](#)
¹ [American Veterinary Medical Association, Emergency Care \(Archived\)](#)
