

HEALTH ISSUES

FEVER: The normal temperature for a dog is 101.5 F. Agitation at having his temperature taken or even very hot weather could increase it by several degrees. 103 degrees in a calm dog should definitely be considered a fever and a veterinarian should be consulted. The absence or presence of fever is essential to diagnosing and evaluating illness. Do not give your dog aspirin or other fever reducing remedies unless advised by your vet. These can be toxic to your dog.

TAKING A DOG'S TEMPERATURE: Keep a digital thermometer and thermometer tip covers and a lubricant, such as Vaseline, in your pet's first aid kit. Apply the lubricant to its tip. Hold on to the base of the dog's tail while you gently insert the thermometer at least one inch into the rectum. Carefully twisting or rolling it back and forth may help if you are having difficulty. Leave it there until the beep sounds. Report the amount of temperature to the vet.

DIGESTIVE UPSETS: Dogs can get diarrhea from changes in diet, water or overfeeding. Mild diarrhea can be treated with reduced feeding (especially reduce such rich foods as meat, milk and canned dog foods) and a coating agent such as Kaopectate or Pepto-Bismol. If the diarrhea is persistent, severe, bloody or any color except the normal medium brown of a dog feces, a visit to your vet is indicated. Take a fecal specimen if possible.

Vomiting and an upset stomach can be caused from eating trash, bugs, grass, mice, decorations or toxic plants. Vomiting that is persistent, severe, bloody or accompanied by depression or abdominal pain should be checked by a vet.

COUGHING: There can be many causes for coughing, from heart defects to simple sore throat and tonsillitis. A coughing dog that is off his feed or has a fever should be seen by a veterinarian. Be sure your dog's Kennel Cough vaccination is current.

SKIN PROBLEMS: There are dozens of skin diseases which may look nearly identical to the untrained eye. Allergic reaction to some foods, grass, parasites, pesticides, or other things in your dog's environment may cause some skin conditions. Talk to your veterinarian and be patient, skin problems may take a while to correct.

EARS: Inspect your dog's ears frequently for signs of trouble such as scratching, rubbing or shaking of the ears, a foul odor, a visible discharge in the ear opening, or holding the head tilted to one side. Any of these signs should be considered as a warning and reported to your vet. Wax, dirt and moisture accumulate in a dog's ear and can cause bacteria and fungus to grow. Keeping the ears clean and dry is the best preventive measure against infections and ear mites. Your vet can advise you as to proper solutions to use for cleaning your dog's ears.

CONVULSIONS: During a convulsion a dog has muscle tremors or movements over which he has no control. He often is unconscious even though his eyes are open. Most convulsions are short, except those caused by poison. Put the dog where he cannot hurt himself. (Remember, a dog can't fall off the ground.) Be careful that you do not get bitten since he has no control of his actions. Have the dog examined by a veterinarian as soon as possible.

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WOUNDS: For superficial cuts and scrapes, gently clean the area with soap and water, then apply an antibiotic ointment. Clipping the hair around the wound will help keep it clean. Deep wounds and tears often require suturing. A pressure bandage can be applied to control bleeding while on the way to the veterinarian. Puncture wounds should be thoroughly and frequently cleaned until healed. Swelling and undue soreness should be checked by your veterinarian.

POISONING: Symptoms vary widely according to the kind of poison involved. Some poisons are ingested and others can be absorbed through the skin or the pads of a dog's feet. Some of the symptoms include vomiting, diarrhea, drooling, pinpoint pupils and or muscle tremors. Immediate veterinarian advice is important! There are 24 hour clinics available. If you know what has been eaten, the vet can tell you whether or not to induce vomiting. Caustic materials can burn the esophagus and throat on the way back up. He may advise you to give the dog an ounce of hydrogen peroxide or a tablespoon of salt or a tablespoon of dry mustard. There are also medicines you can get at drug stores.

If the poison is on the skin rather than in the dog's stomach, you should sponge it off as quickly as possible.

Prevention is much better than treatment. Keep household poisons out of reach of your dog just as you would keep them from a toddler. Anti-freeze is deadly. Most insecticides are cumulative and combining sprays, dips, powders and flea collars indiscriminately can cause serious problems.

SERIOUS INJURY AND SHOCK: If your dog is hit by a car or is seriously hurt, most of the principles of human first aid will apply. Any dog, no matter what his training or normal disposition, might bite if in pain or disoriented from shock. Muzzle him unless there is serious injury to his nose or jaws. After you are able to handle him safely, apply a pressure bandage to any major bleeding points. Broken bones are best handled as little as possible. The only exception is covering an exposed bone with a sterile dressing to prevent further contamination. If a dog is in shock, he should be kept warm and quiet and receive prompt medical attention.

The signs of shock are weakness, collapse, rapid shallow breathing or very slow deep breathing, cold extremities and pale or bluish gums. If there is the slightest possibility of a back injury, extreme caution should be used not to bend or twist the dog's body. A folding lawn chair or blanket will often make a good stretcher for moving an injured dog. The above suggestions are not intended to replace proper and immediate veterinary care.