

Outfitting A First-Aid Kit

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What should you include in a first-aid kit for your dog? In reality, it should contain items similar to those in a human first-aid kit. A few additions are all it takes to turn a basic kit into the perfect pack for both humans and dogs.

You need bandage material to keep wounds clean and stop bleeding. A sensible way to bandage a cut on a dog's leg is to first cover the wound with a sterile dressing pad, gauze sponge or even a sanitary napkin. Next, wrap the site with a gauze strip such as Cling gauze to hold the pad in place. Then secure the bandage with an adhesive tape such as Elastoplast, which sticks above and below the gauze but does not touch the wound itself.

Clean a wound or hot spot by scrubbing it with an antiseptic soap (buy this from the pharmacy or your veterinarian). Thick hair needs to be clipped for the skin to be cleaned. You can use a pair of scissors, an electric trimmer or even a mustache trimmer. An antibiotic ointment can be applied to damaged skin or to wounds prior to bandaging.

Band-Aids are useful for small cuts on people and are the most commonly used item in the kit. Unfortunately, Band-Aids don't work on dogs because they have too much fur.

Every first-aid kit should include a thermometer. Normal rectal temperature for a dog is 37.5 to 39°C. Most people use a mercury rectal thermometer that can be wiped off and sterilized with rubbing alcohol (don't put it under hot water). Be sure to shake it down first, and use a little Vaseline for lubrication.

Pepto-Bismol can be given to dogs suffering from minor stomach ailments. The dose is one to two millilitres per kilogram up to three times daily. If the vomiting doesn't resolve or if your dog becomes depressed, he should be examined by his veterinarian. Do not give Pepto-Bismol to a cat. Because of how their livers function, it can be toxic.

If your dog consumes a poison, such as slug bait, marijuana or rotten garbage, emptying his stomach can get the toxins out of his body before they're absorbed. In these cases, time is of the essence so it may be better to induce vomiting at home before taking your dog to the vet hospital.

Always call your veterinarian and ask if vomiting is recommended based on the toxin consumed. In some cases, such as ingestion of a petroleum product, it's better to leave the toxin in the stomach and give activated charcoal.

If it's necessary to induce vomiting, give hydrogen peroxide at a dose of one teaspoon per five kilograms body weight. If this doesn't work, repeat it 10 minutes later. If it still fails, your veterinarian has other products that can help empty the stomach.

An Elizabethan collar is a practical item every first-aid kit should contain. A collar can prevent your dog from further damaging a sore eye, or from licking a wound or hot spot and making it worse. The collar should be appropriately sized for your dog.

Blankets serve two purposes. If a dog is in shock after being hit by a car, a blanket can keep him warm. If a dog can't walk, a blanket can be used to move him. A towel is useful for drying a wet dog to prevent chilling.

Put a leash in your first-aid kit – it's always hard to find one in an emergency. A piece of rope with a loop at one end is a good substitute.

Lastly, include your veterinarian's number, as well as contact numbers for the nearest emergency veterinary hospital.

HOME FIRST-AID KIT FOR PEOPLE AND PETS

ITEM	USE
Adhesive tape	For bandaging
Sterile dressing pads	Covers wounds (can use sanitary napkins)
Cling gauze	Holds pads on wound
Gauze sponges	Covers or cleans wounds
Elastoplast	Holds bandage to skin/hair
Scissors	Cuts bandage material
Antiseptic soap	Cleans wounds
Antibiotic ointment	Treats minor wounds
Thermometer	Measures body temperature
Antihistamine	For allergic reactions
Pepto-Bismol	Treats minor stomach upsets
Eye wash	Washes eyes
Hydrogen peroxide (3%)	Induces vomiting
Elizabethan collar	Prevents wound-licking and eye-rubbing
Blanket/towel	For warmth or transport
Rope/leash	Restraint

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