



Dr. Greg's

*10 Practical Home Remedies
for Your Dog*

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It's unnerving enough...just finding out that your dog or cat is swollen somewhere that it shouldn't be, shaking and scratching at its painful ears, sneezing blood, holding up a sore leg, yelping in pain when you pick it up or move its head, acting listless, puking, scratching itchy skin until it's raw, straining, suffering from runny diarrhea with spots of blood in it...and, well, bleeding from anywhere. The only thing worse is when you realize it is after clinic hours and you may have to seek emergency care. You may think it's time to panic. Maybe it is and maybe it isn't.

I'm Dr. Greg Martinez, author of *Dog Dish Diet: Sensible Nutrition for Your Dog's Health*. I've got some advice and rules of thumb that may help you to help your dog or cat...until you can get in to see your regular vet.

First, let me stress that if your pet seems to be very sick, in pain, or bleeding profusely there is no decision to make. Call and seek help immediately. If it's after hours, however, prepare yourself for a much more expensive veterinary visit. Emergency clinics are staffed nights, holidays and weekends with veterinarians that specialize in trauma and critical care, along with a full staff of technicians and veterinary assistants, all of whom provide treatment and monitoring all night or weekend long. That's good news when your sick or injured pet needs immediate

attention. The bad news is, it will cost you anywhere from a minimum of \$200 to several \$1000—even if what you thought was a serious problem....isn't.

If the symptoms are not obviously life threatening, here are two options you may consider:

- 1.If you are unsure of the severity of the condition, you may get an exam at the emergency clinic and delay expensive treatment until your vet opens the next day (when the same treatment may be less costly),

2. If you are reasonably sure that the condition is mild, not too uncomfortable for your pet, and treatment could wait a few hours or even a day, you could administer some home first aid. This guide—while not a diagnostic tool—lists some safe medications you can administer for temporary relief.

WARNING: While some over-the-counter medication can provide your pet with temporary relief, you need to be very careful NOT to give your dog or cat Tylenol (acetaminophen is the generic form) or ibuprofen. And while dogs can have aspirin (see dosage recommendations in 5, below) do NOT give aspirin to your cat. Pain relievers for cats are best purchased from your vet.

Here are some first-aid home remedies:

- 1** A dog or cat that is **drooling, nauseous or vomiting** often responds to a Pepcid (famotidine is the generic name) tablet. If your dog or cat looks pretty normal but has vomited once or twice in a short time (or is eating lots of grass) Pepcid may help make your pet feel better. Remember severe vomiting in a young pup or adult could signal a parvovirus infection or other severe medical or surgical problems. If you feel that your pet is really sick, do not delay seeking treatment. *Recommended dosage:* 1/4 Pepcid tablet per 10 pounds, once daily.
- 2** **Diarrhea** can be caused by infections like parvovirus, food poisoning, parasitic bugs like *Giardia* and Coccidia, as well as from eating something dead, garbage, wood, plastic, foil, shoes...almost anything. If the diarrhea and symptoms are not severe, take away the dog's food for 24 hours and use Immodium (loperamide is the generic form). *Recommended dosage:* 1/2 tablet for small dogs and 1 whole table for large dogs, administered 3 times a day. If the condition worsens, it's best to seek professional help. For cats, I recommend you ask your vet for Flagyl

(metronidazol is the generic form). Fasting, immunity, and over-the-counter drugs may solve the problem in a few days. In many cases of diarrhea with small specks of blood, the cause may be a reaction to allergens or preservatives in commercial treats and chews. It is a good exercise to review any new food or treats that may coincide with the diarrhea. This goes for vomiting after meals as well.

- 3** Many dogs that like to chase and eat bees and wasps can get rewarded with a nice **sting and ugly swelling on their lips and face** that can make a Doxie look like a Shar Pei. This same syndrome can occur from allergic reactions to a new food or treat. While the swelling looks ugly, it rarely causes problems breathing. If the swelling is severe or is in any way scary, proceed to the closest emergency clinic. If you would like to try an over-the-counter medication, Benadryl or Claritin will slow the swelling. The face usually returns to normal within 12 hours. *Recommended dosage:* For Benadryl, give 1 pill per 30 pounds 2 or 3 times daily; with Claritin, give 1 pill per 30 pounds once daily.



- 4** **Common dog ticks** jump on pets and attach themselves a short time after contact. They become firmly joined, and we have all heard methods for removing

them: Touching an extinguished but still-hot match to the tick's butt, twisting counter-clockwise, and covering with oil are just a few of the techniques. Oh, and don't leave the head in or an abscess or death will result...well that's how the urban myth goes. Here's the truth: You pinch and pull by grasping the tick as close to the skin as you can and pulling slowly and forcefully until the tick comes off. There is often a residual bump and redness at the tick bite site for several weeks—the result of bite penetration, saliva, body parts, and infectious agents. If the bite does not look too swollen or infected, antibiotic ointment will help with any minor infection and cortisone cream can relieve swelling, and yes, it's safe if your dog licks the treated area.

- 5** Dogs love to play and sometimes they overdo it when a new friend or activity drives them to play extra hard and **strain a joint, throw out their back, or pull a muscle**. Middle-age dogs can hurt themselves just jumping off the bed or sofa. Dogs with these injuries will not move much, shiver, and often yelp when they are picked up. They'll usually recover with time. In the meanwhile, you can treat the pain with aspirin. *Recommended dosage:* One 300-mg adult aspirin (NOT Tylenol or ibuprofen) per 30 pounds twice daily can help with the discomfort and

pain. One baby aspirin per 10 pounds will work for puppies and toy breeds. And remember, NO aspirin, Tylenol or ibuprofen for cats.

6 Red, raw skin and red, inflamed ears can signify an allergic reaction and cause lots of pain and itching. If you think the symptoms can wait until you can get to your regular, then try to make your dog more comfortable. You can use Benadryl and aspirin at the dosages recommended in 3 and 5, above. Hydrocortisone cream rubbed on the red area also will work to decrease pain and inflammation.



In addition to allergies, ticks and plant awns can cause those red, painful, itchy ears. Dogs will shake their head and dig at their ears or tilt their head, holding the painful ear down. Washing the ear with warm water and white vinegar (9 parts water to 1 part white vinegar), dosing with aspirin (see 5, above, and remember NO aspirin for cats) and applying cortisone cream may relieve symptoms until you get to the vet. If the ears are really goopy, you can use warm water and a bit of mild shampoo to help get the toxic goo out of the ears, so that the medication can help.

7 Small cuts and abscesses look terrible, but you can clean both with warm, soapy water and wait until the next day...as long as your pet seems happy and not unduly bothered by the wound. Dosing with aspirin (NOT for cats) and applying antibiotic cream with help keep discomfort and infection down until your pet can be seen. Many vets use 3M's Vetbond to help keep wounds closed, and I have to confess that I have used Krazy Glue (the same thing as Vetbond) a few times when I have cut myself. If you hold the wound together and apply a very small amount of glue to the cut edges—without getting a bunch of glue inside—the wound may be in better shape to be treated when you get to your vet. To prevent your dog from chewing or licking the wound or abscess, you can put a plastic pet cone around its neck (also called a “satellite dish” or “Elizabethan” collar). If you don't have one of these and the wound or bandaged area is too accessible, try covering the area with a sock or t-shirt and holding it in place with medical tape.

8 Broken toenails can occur when a dog's toenails do not wear down naturally, due to a pampered lifestyle or to the fact that your dog's gait or paw shape keeps the nails from coming in contact with the ground enough. Broken nails can be quite painful and annoying, but they're generally not critical. For the most part,

you want to keep your dog comfortable and unable to chew on the nail. You can use aspirin, antibiotic cream and a bandage and/or sock as a temporary fix.

- 9 A word about wounds and bandages:** First, they only work on paws and lower limbs. Second, putting one on too tight can shut off critical circulation. You can apply firm pressure by hand or with a bandage temporarily—just to stop the bleeding—but after a few minutes, apply a softer pressure bandage or a sock over the injured area. Remember, if you tape the sock in place, take care not to cut off circulation. And don't be surprised if your dog removes all your hard work in a few minutes.



- 10 Seizures** can look critical (and very terrifying) but are only dangerous if, after one ends, the next one begins immediately, or if the seizures are nonstop. Most vets won't even treat seizures with an anti-convulsant unless the seizures are frequent or severe in nature. If your dog comes out of the seizure in a few minutes and looks a little groggy, but otherwise no worse for wear, you could probably delay a trip to the vet until the next day. Just as with diarrhea and vomiting, seizures can occur after feeding allergenic food, treats, chews and scraps. My book *Dog Dish*

Diet: Sensible Nutrition for Your Dog's Health will help you determine if certain foods are the problem.

As with all illness and injury, if you have any doubt about the severity of the problem, please call your local or emergency vet. These tips are only to be used on mild conditions and to keep your pet safe and comfortable until you can consult your vet. More severe health problems may need a diagnosis for the correct treatment.



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