



SFAH **Client Care Series**

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FELINE EMERGENCIES AND FIRST AID

What kinds of emergencies might occur?

There are many possible medical emergencies that your pet may experience ranging from being struck by an automobile to acute internal problems such as an intestinal blockage. The following are some of the most common and serious conditions seen in veterinary hospitals that require immediate attention:

- Any severe difficulty in breathing or gasping for breath
- Cardiac failure
- Massive bleeding
- Profound shock from any cause
- Anaphylaxis (severe allergic reactions)
- Penetrating wounds of the thorax (chest) or abdomen
- Coma and loss of consciousness
- Poisoning
- Massive injuries to the body
- Seizures
- Burns and scalds
- Heat stroke
- Bites and fight wounds



- Continuous vomiting and/or diarrhea

What can I do while awaiting veterinary help?

- Keep calm. This is important for both you and your pet.
- Contact your veterinary hospital, inform them of the situation and get first aid advice.
- Keep your cat warm, as quiet as possible, and keep movement to a minimum, especially if there is possible trauma, broken limbs, or any neurological symptoms.
- For specific aid refer to the information below..

Obtain a suitable container such as a strong cardboard box. Drop a blanket or thick towel over the patient. Tuck it in carefully or maneuver the cat onto the blanket so it can be gently placed in the cardboard box or directly into your car.

- Get to a veterinary hospital as soon as possible, but drive carefully!

Emergency Situation — Action

Automobile injury — Make sure your cat has a clear airway, but do *not* put your hand in its mouth if your cat is conscious. Cover wounds with whatever suitable material is available. Handle your cat with care, supporting its body as much as possible. Carry it in a basket, box, or cage to the veterinary hospital.

Bleeding (hemorrhage) — If hemorrhage is severe on a limb, apply a tourniquet above the wound just tight enough to significantly reduce flow of blood. Be sure to loosen it every twenty minutes. Apply a pad of cotton or wool over a gauze dressing to the wound or bleeding point and bandage it firmly and simply apply direct pressure while you seek veterinary care.



Seizures — Prevent your cat from injuring itself. Do not put your hand in its mouth. Keep your cat as quiet as possible and prevent it from falling. Do not attempt to interrupt the seizure. Most seizures last less than two to three minutes. If the seizure lasts longer than five minutes, you may need to transfer your pet during this state. Once your cat has recovered from the seizure, keep it calm and warm and comfort your cat by talking gently to it while petting.

Burns — Cool the burned area with cool water by running water over the burn or cover it with wet towels. This also helps remove caustic substances (acid or alkaline) if these are the cause. If loss of skin occurs, cover the area with the cleanest material available.

Heat stroke — Place your cat in a tub of cool water. When you are ready to transport your cat to the veterinary hospital, wrap it in a cool, wet towel.

Hemorrhagic gastroenteritis (diarrhea with blood, with or without vomiting) — Seek veterinary attention. This is a serious condition, especially in cats.

Bites and fight wounds — Clean the wounds immediately with warm water and seek veterinary attention.

Poisons — If a product label is available see if there are first aid instructions, such as whether or not to induce vomiting. You can usually induce vomiting with 5 ml (one teaspoon) of hydrogen peroxide orally or a teaspoon of salt placed in mouth. Keep a sample of the vomitus for testing. DO NOT INDUCE VOMITING if your cat has ingested foreign objects (plastic wrapping, paper, etc.). If corrosive or toxic material is on the skin, rinse for fifteen minutes. Bring a sample of the suspected poison with its container to the veterinary hospital.

Eye injury — If the cornea is penetrated or perforated it will be very painful. Prevent your cat from scratching at its eye causing further damage. If the eyeball is out of its socket, keep it moist with saline solution (e.g. contact lens solution) and protect it from direct injury. Seek veterinary help immediately.

Shock (see below) — Keep your cat warm and quiet. Seek immediate veterinary help.

What is shock?

Shock has many definitions. It is a complex systemic or whole body reaction to a number of situations. These include acute loss of blood volume such as hemorrhage, heart failure and other causes of decreased circulation (e.g. severe and sudden allergic reaction and heat stroke). If not treated quickly and effectively, systemic shock may cause irreversible injury to body cells, and it can be rapidly fatal.

How do I recognize shock?

Signs include rapid breathing which may be noisy, rapid heart rate with a weak pulse, pale (possibly even white) mucous membranes (gums, lips, under eyelids), severe depression (listlessness) and cool extremities (limbs and ears). The cat may vomit.

