



WHEN SHOULD I TAKE MY PET TO THE EMERGENCY VET?

This vet-informed guide is designed to help you feel more confident in those moments of uncertainty.

PET EMERGENCIES: WHEN TO TAKE ACTION (AND WHEN TO PAUSE)

When your pet isn't acting like themselves, it's natural to worry. But not every change means emergency veterinary services are needed. Sometimes taking a moment to observe and assess is the right first step.

You'll find common symptoms grouped by urgency, so you can better understand when to seek emergency care, when to contact your regular vet, and when it's okay to monitor your pet at home.

SAFE TO MONITOR AT HOME (FOR NOW)

Symptoms that are usually okay to watch for 24–48 hours.

- Skipping one meal but otherwise acting normal
- Occasional paw licking or ear scratching
- Minor limp that improves with rest
- Low energy after a big outing (but responsive)
- A single instance of vomiting after eating too fast

MONITOR CLOSELY AT HOME AND CALL VET IF IT GETS WORSE

Symptoms that may not need a trip to the ER, but do require a vet's attention soon.

- Mild vomiting or diarrhea (no blood, and still eating/acting normal)
- Limping but still weight-bearing
- Minor cuts or scrapes without active bleeding
- Sneezing or mild coughing, no distress
- Blood in vomit/stool/urine, but your pet is acting fine otherwise
- Itchy skin or mild allergic reactions (like a few hives)
- Sudden, minor behavioral changes (not aggressive or extreme changes)

GO TO THE EMERGENCY VET NOW

Call your emergency vet immediately if you notice any of the following.

- Difficulty breathing or choking on an object
- Extreme lethargy, collapse, or unconsciousness
- White or pale gums
- Seizures that last more than 3 minutes or cluster
- Bleeding that won't stop
- Hit by car or fall from a height
- Bloated, hard abdomen (especially with restlessness or retching) or pregnancy complications such as dystocia
- Inability to urinate or defecate, especially if straining
- Ingestion of toxins, such as chocolate, xylitol, grapes, raisins, or human medications like Tylenol and Ibuprofen
- Eye injuries or sudden blindness

TIPS IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

- Keep your local emergency vet's info on your fridge or phone
- Know the nearest 24/7 animal ER (especially before holidays or when traveling)
- If in doubt, call—emergency vet staff can help triage over the phone