



FEATURE



Canine First Aid: *Choking*

By Joanne Bibby | Extract from FURSAFE Emergency Dog First Aid Guide

Definition of Choking

A dog unable to breathe due to an airway blockage or obstruction.

Cause

A foreign object gets stuck in a dog's throat or has an object wrapped around the neck of a dog.

Safety Precautions

As dog owners, we must learn what hazards exist, and then isolate the dog from those hazards. This can be achieved by not leaving the hazard around, don't allow our dogs to continue chewing something hazardous and teaching them to 'leave it' or 'drop it'.

Choking Hazards

A woman, while out on a walk ages ago, asked me if my Silky chewed tea towels, bedding and shoes like her Silky did. I responded smugly that 'Oh no, my Silky doesn't do anything like that!!' Then out of the blue Izzy began chewing plastic! From cellophane to plastic bags to ice cream containers and storage containers – all things which could have ended in disaster. That smug look on my face was wiped off, that's for sure!

The fact is that all dogs are at risk of choking. Why? Because they use their mouths to learn, investigate, play with and decide if the tempting item tastes good.

Hazards to be aware of, but not limited to:

- Dog treats which can break into large pieces
- Dogs eating too fast on large pieces of food
- Feeding small dog's large pieces of food
- Plastic, rubber, fabric
- Bones which can break and splinter or where the ball joint breaks off a lamb leg, etc
- Tennis balls which can compress in the dog's mouth and become stuck
- Small tennis balls designed for small dogs becoming lodged in a larger dog's throat
- Children's toys which have small parts
- Batteries
- Clothing like socks, underwear, bikinis
- The squeaky thing in the squeaky toy
- Long leash, fishing wire or rope wrapped around dog's neck

Signs and Symptoms of Choking

- Dog appears agitated or distressed, pacing back and forth
- Pawing at the mouth
- Has difficulty breathing or begins gasping for breath
- Legs splayed with head down as though dog is trying to draw breath
- Gums, lips, tongue turns blue or grey
- Neck stretched out, if sitting
- Drooling uncontrollably
- Collapse
- Experiences respiratory failure



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Action

1. Undertake Primary Assessment DRSABC

- Check for dangers – a danger may be that the dog has become aggressive (warning: never put a muzzle on a dog who has breathing difficulties).
- Is your dog responding to your voice or your touch? If not, your dog may be unconscious.
- Send for help – if there is someone else in the house get them to do things like get the first aid kit, help carry dog into house, prepare the car and call the Vet. They may also be able to help you restrain your dog.
- Check the airway for vomit in the mouth, or foreign object and remove if there is.

2. Removing foreign object

- Open dog's mouth, pull tongue forward.
- If the object is visible, use your forceps or tweezers to remove the object. If it breaks into pieces, remove all if possible. You can try to remove an object using a finger sweep (move finger from one side of mouth to the other). Be careful not to push object deeper into throat. If your dog is behaving aggressively do not use finger sweep method.
- Check the breathing (respirations). Feel/watch the rise and fall of the chest – start artificial respiration if not breathing.
- Check circulation – start CPR if no pulse.
- Get to Vet. Do not pull on hooks (e.g. fish hooks) or pull on the tiny neck bones located in the back of a dog's throat.

3. If you cannot reach the object or see it, administer the Heimlich Manoeuvre

- Small Dog: Lift dog upside down with hips/back legs. Put dog's back against your stomach, head facing down, place your hands or closed fist on the dog's belly just under the rib cage and push in the direction of your stomach sharply, 5 times to expel object.
 - Large Dog: Bend over behind dog and lift dog's hips/ back legs. Wrap your arms around dog's belly close to hips (push air out of lungs); thrust your arms/hands up and toward their lower rib cage, sharply 5 times to expel object.
 - Stop and check airway after thrusts to see if the object has become dislodged and remove it if you can. Continue to repeat procedure and re-check until you arrive at the vet surgery. Do not continue the thrusting process if the object has been removed.
 - Check the breathing (respirations) feel/ watch the rise and fall of the chest. Start artificial respiration if not breathing.
 - Check circulation (pulse) – start CPR if no pulse.
- If object is removed and your dog has stopped breathing, you will need to begin artificial respiration.
 - If heart stops, begin CPR.
 - Wrap in warm blanket.
 - Get to vet. If you have a driver:
 - If your dog stops breathing, begin artificial respiration on the way to the vet surgery; if your dog's heart stops beating, begin CPR on the way to the vet surgery.

Reference: *Fursafe Canine Emergency First Aid Guide*

*** Please find on opposite page a Dog First Aid Choking and CPR Chart to assist.**

PLEASE NOTE:

The actions mentioned above are only if it is a dire emergency. If the dog has collapsed, try to remove any obvious object, but getting to the vet ASAP is always the best way forward.

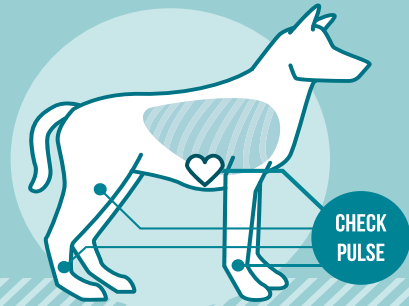
You could try and pull a blocking object out, but the odds of :

a) being bitten, b) not dislodging the object and c) trying to pull the laryngeal cartilages out (have had people damaging the larynx) are all quite high.

The main emphasis should always be on getting the dog to the vet immediately and getting professional help! ¹ - Dr Karen Hedberg BVSc



- A. CLEAN AIRWAY**
(MANUAL CLEANING/HEIMLICH MANEUVER)
- B. BREATHING**
(RESCUE BREATH)
- C. CIRCULATION**
(CHEST COMPRESSIONS)



1
AIRWAYS

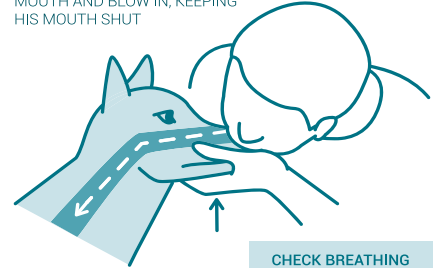
OPEN DOG'S MOUTH, PULL THE TONGUE, STRAIGHTEN NECK AND LOCATE THE OBJECT



PUT AN HAND IN DOG'S MOUTH AND PULL OUT THE OBJECT THAT IS BLOCKING THE AIRWAY
BE CARUFEUL NOT TO PUSH THE OBJECT FURTHER DOWN THE THROAT



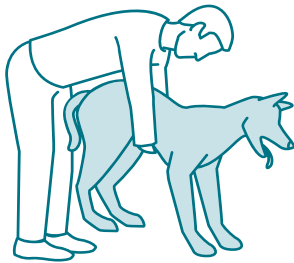
AFTER CLEANING AIRWAYS: IF THE DOG IS UNCONSCIOUS COVER HIS NOSE WITH YOUR MOUTH AND BLOW IN, KEEPING HIS MOUTH SHUT



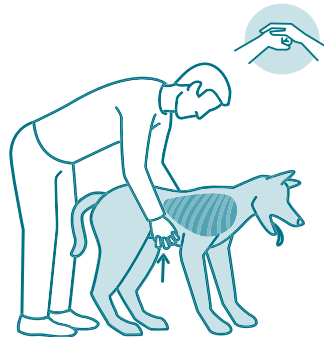
CHECK BREATHING AND PULSE

2
HEIMLICH MANEUVER

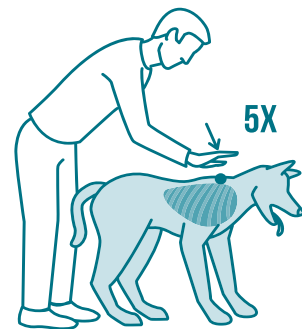
RAISE HIS BACK LEGS TO HELP DISLodge THE OBJECT



IF THE OBJECT CAN'T BE DISLodgeD APPLY PRESSURE ON THE ABDOMEN BEHIND THE RIB CAGE, REPEAT FEW TIMES (HEIMLICH MANEUVER).



IF THE HEIMLICH MANEUVER DOES NOT WORK GIVE 5 SHARP BLOWS WITH YOUR HANDS ON THE DOG'S BACK BETWEEN SHOULDER BLADES

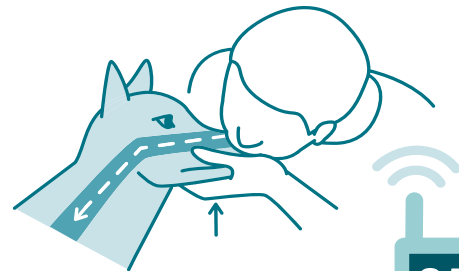
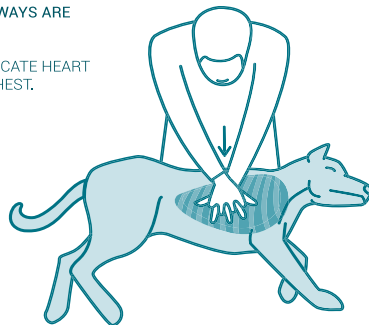


3
CPR

PERFORM CPR ONLY WHEN AIRWAYS ARE CLEAN.

LAY THE DOG ON A SIDE AND LOCATE HEART BEHIND HIS HELBOW ON THE CHEST.

ALTERNATE 3-5 COMPRESSIONS/ 1 BREATHE



CALL VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY!