

## How to Perform CPR on a Dog

**Veterinarian Leslie Sinclair, DVM explains how to perform this life-saving procedure on your dog.**

*Leslie Sinclair, DVM*

Q. How do I perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on my dog?

Leslie Sinclair, DVM says: The purpose of CPR is to assist the heart to beat and to keep oxygen circulating through the lungs and therefore throughout the body in an unconscious person (or dog). In dogs, as in humans, CPR is a last resort, an emergency procedure you perform when you cannot immediately deliver the patient to a medical care facility.

To determine whether your dog needs CPR, check the ABCs: Airway, Breathing, and Circulation. **Airway.** Be sure the mouth and throat are clear of any obstructions. Lay the dog on his side and use your finger to clear his throat of any fluids or foreign matter. **Breathing.** Observe the dog to determine whether he is breathing. Watch for the rise and fall of his chest. Hold a small mirror up to his nostrils to see if the mirror fogs. If he is breathing, you do not need to perform CPR. Immediately take the dog to a veterinarian for examination and further care. **Circulation.** There are several ways to tell if a dog's heart is beating. If you have a stethoscope (available at any pharmacy), place it on the dog's left side of the chest, just above the elbow, and listen for the heartbeat. You can also gently squeeze the chest between your fingers and thumb in this area to feel for a heartbeat. The best place to check a dog's pulse is on the inner thigh, where the leg meets the body. Practice feeling a pulse in a healthy dog until you are comfortable locating it. The normal pulse rate for a small dog (under 30 pounds) is 100 to 160 beats per minute; a medium to large dog (over 30 pounds) is 60 to 100 beats per minute, and a puppy (less than one year old) is 120 to 160 beats per minute. If there is no circulation (no heartbeat), compress the chest between your fingers and thumb (puppy or small dog) or between both hands; remember that the dog's heart is just above the elbows. Compress carefully and gently to avoid breaking the ribs in a small, young, or old dog. To perform breathing, cover the dog's mouth and nose with your lips. Breathe just enough so that you see the chest rise. For a large dog, hold the lips closed together, and breathe into the nostrils. If performing chest compressions, give one breath every three to five compressions, then check to see if the dog has a pulse or is breathing on his own. If he has a heartbeat but is not breathing, give one breath every two to three seconds. Transport him as quickly as possible to a veterinary hospital.

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