



First aid for pets struggling to breathe

Overview

- Struggling to breathe is a life-threatening emergency.
- Stay calm: stress is likely to make them worse.
- Take your pet to your nearest vets if they are struggling to breathe, call them on the way to let them know you are coming.
- Pets that are struggling to breathe often have noisy breathing, lie stretched out and take fast, short breaths.

First aid



Step one: Stay calm

- Keep your pet calm and cool – stress will make their breathing worse.

Step two: Check your pet

- If your pet is struggling to breathe, they are likely to have the some of the following symptoms:
 - Noisy breathing



- Fast breathing
- White, blue or grey gums
- Stretching out to breathe more easily
- Cats will open their mouths to breathe if they are really struggling
- **Check for choking** - do they have anything stuck in their mouth or throat that you can remove?
- **Stopped breathing?** If your pet has stopped breathing, give CPR.

Step three: Call your vet

- Whether you need to call your vet, or go straight to your vet practice will depend on how severe your pet's breathing problem is.
- Take your pet to your vets immediately if they:
 - are unable to breathe
 - have collapsed
 - have white, grey or blue gums
 - are getting rapidly worse
- If possible, phone on the way to check they are ready for your pet to arrive.
- If your pet has less serious signs that improve once they calm down, they may not need emergency treatment, but it's still best to get them checked, especially if their breathing is quicker or noisier than usual.

Pre-existing conditions

If your pet has a condition that affects their breathing, such as heart disease, asthma or [BOAS](#), it's important to contact your vet if their breathing changes.

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