



# CPR for Dogs and Puppies

## Overview

- CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation) is a technique that can be used to keep blood and oxygen pumping around the body if the heart stops beating.
- This article tells you how to perform CPR on a dog, but we also recommend that all pet owners learn the technique at a veterinary first aid course.
- It's important to know that CPR is not appropriate for every collapsed dog, so it's vitally important to check whether it's the right thing to do before starting.
- Never perform CPR on a healthy dog, or a dog whose heart is still beating (even if they are unconscious), as it could seriously hurt, or even kill them.

## What is CPR?

CPR (Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation) is a technique that can be used if a dog's heart stops beating. It involves compressing the chest to keep blood pumping around the body, and giving breaths to keep oxygen in the lungs.

## When is CPR appropriate?

CPR can save lives, but before you start it's extremely important to make sure it's the right thing to do. CPR is definitely worth a try if the collapsed dog is otherwise healthy, and their heart has stopped because of a known cause such as electrocution, drowning, or choking. However, if the dog has an underlying health problem or severe injuries, trying to bring them back with CPR is very unlikely to be successful, and may not be the kindest option for them.

It's also important to make sure that you are in a safe environment to perform CPR, and that you have someone to help you transport the dog to the vet.



CPR is not appropriate if you are somewhere unsafe, likely to get hurt, or are unable to get to a vet practice.

## Checks before CPR

Before starting CPR, you will need to perform some checks:

### **Step 1:**

#### **Is the dog is unconscious?**

- Call out to make sure they are unconscious and continue speaking to them as you approach.
- If they don't respond, gently rub their side, but be ready to move away quickly in case they turn to bite – dogs are much more likely to bite if they are injured or scared.
- If the dog is unconscious, continue to step 2.

### **Step 2:**

#### **Airway**

- Pull the dog's tongue forward to make sure it's not blocking their airway, and take a look down it to check there is nothing else blocking it.
- If there is something in their throat, remove it following our advice on ['First Aid for Choking'](#).
- If their airway is clear, move to step 3 to check their breathing.

### **Step 3:**

#### **Breathing**

- Is the dog breathing? Look and listen. Can you see their chest rising and falling? Can you feel breath coming from their nostrils?
- If the dog is breathing, they do not need CPR.
- If they're not breathing, move to step 4 and check for a heartbeat.

### **Step 4:**

#### **Circulation**

- Place your hand or ear on the left side of the dog's chest to check for a heartbeat – if you're not sure exactly where to check, gently pull their front leg back and listen/feel around where the elbow meets the chest.
- If you can't hear or feel a heartbeat, double check by feeling for a pulse on the inside of their upper thigh.



- If you can't feel or hear a heartbeat, begin CPR, and ask someone to call the nearest vet to let them know you're coming.

## Performing CPR

### Step 1

#### **Put the dog on their right hand side, on a firm, flat surface**

- Unless they are a very flat chested breed (for example a British Bulldog), in which case they need to be on their back.

### Step 2

#### **Place your hand(s) over their heart:**

- Small dogs (under 5kg): Wrap your strongest hand around their chest with your thumb on top, and your fingers underneath. Keep your other hand behind their back to stop them moving.
- Small – medium dogs (5-10kg): Sit behind them and place one hand directly over their heart.
- Large dogs (over 10kg): Sit behind them and place both hands interlocked, over the widest part of their chest.
- Deep-chested dogs (such as Greyhounds and Great Danes): Sit behind them and interlock both hands directly over their heart.
- Flat chested dogs (such as British Bulldogs): Place both hands directly on the midpoint of their chest.

### Step 3

#### **Give 30 chest compressions at a rate of two per second (the beat of the song 'Staying Alive' is about right)**

- Small dogs (under 5kg): Squeeze your thumb and fingers together to compress the chest by one third to a half, and allow it to return to full size after each compression.
- All dogs over 5kg: Keep your arms straight, directly above the dog, and use your body to drive the compression. Compress the chest by one third to a half, and allow it to return to full size after each compression.

### Step 4:

#### **Give two breaths**

- Extend the dog's neck so that their nose is in line with their back, firmly close their mouth, form an airtight seal with your mouth around their nostrils.



- Give them a breath, watch for the rise of the chest, and allow it to fall again before giving a second breath.
- For big dogs, it may be necessary to close the side of their nostrils with your hand before blowing down the nose from the front.

**Step 5:**

**Repeat 30 compressions followed by 2 breaths for 2 minutes, then check for a heartbeat.**

- No heartbeat = continue CPR while continuing to make plans to transport them to a vet. If you have someone with you, swap after each 2 minute cycle as CPR can be very tiring.
- Heartbeat and breathing = take them to the vets immediately as an emergency.

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