

First aid for choking

Overview

- Choking is a serious life-threatening problem that needs immediate action.
- A choking pet will have difficulty breathing, will make choking sounds, might paw at their mouth and you might see their lips, gums and tongue turning blue.
- Common choke risks include: balls, raw hide chews and small toys
- Be careful: a choking pet may panic and bite

What to do if your pet is choking



Step one: Is your pet choking?

- Choking or coughing? Can they breathe? If your pet is coughing, they will still be able to breathe-in, if they are choking, your pet will struggle to breathe at all.
- Do you know what they could be choking on? Were they just playing with a toy or did they have a chew?
- Is there anything obvious you can remove from their mouth?

Step two: Try to remove what they are choking on

- Keep your pet calm
- If you can see something in the mouth:

- Use pliers or tweezers to get hold of it and remove it.
- Do not stick your fingers in your pet's mouth if they are conscious, this may make them panic more and could lead to you getting bitten
- If your pet is unconscious:
 - Open their mouth, gently sweep your fingers across the back of their throat and remove anything that is lodged there.
- If you can't remove the object:
 - Lay your pet on their side
 - Place both hands on the side of your pet's rib cage
 - Push quickly and firmly or strike the rib cage with the flat of your hand three to four times.
 - The idea is to push air and the object out of their lungs. Keep repeating this until the object comes out.

Step three: Call your vets if you still can't remove the object

- If you are unable to dislodge the object, call your vet straight away for an emergency appointment

How to prevent choking

- Choose balls and toys that are the correct size for your pet, preferably with holes in. Ask your local veterinary practice for advice if you are unsure.
- Always supervise your pet when they are playing with toys or eating chew sticks.
- Do not throw toys and food to be caught in mid-air, always aim for them to be picked-up from the ground.

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