

Dog CPR, First Aid & Safety for Pet Professionals & Dedicated Owners

Shock

Shock is a life-threatening condition that develops when a traumatic injury or illness causes impaired blood flow and oxygen to the vital organs and tissues. There are three stages of shock. In early shock, the body attempts to compensate for the decreased blood flow by sending out a rush of blood. In the mid-to-late stages, the body can no longer compensate. Common causes of shock include severe external or internal bleeding (such as from being struck by a vehicle), severe dehydration, allergic reactions (anaphylactic shock) and blood infections (septic shock). Shock can develop immediately or be delayed for several hours.

IMMEDIATE VETERINARY TREATMENT IS ESSENTIAL FOR ALL CASES OF SHOCK.

Treating Shock

- **Control bleeding.** If shock is resulting from blood loss, control bleeding quickly to prevent a further drop in blood flow/oxygen (see *Bleeding* lesson).
- **If the dog is unconscious,** check for breathing and heartbeat/pulse and administer rescue breathing/CPR if necessary.
- **Stabilize the dog if necessary.** If there are broken bones or a spinal injury, stabilize the dog for transport to the vet (see *Transporting Injured Dogs for Treatment*). **Cover the dog with a blanket, coat or towel** to keep him warm.
- **Elevate the hind end slightly** by placing a folded towel under the dog's hindquarters (skip this step if you suspect a spinal/back injury, or if it causes pain).
- **Get immediate veterinary treatment.** If you have someone with you, have the person very gently massage the dog's legs and muscles (if there are no broken bones) to help maintain blood circulation as you drive to the veterinary hospital.

SIGNS OF SHOCK

Early Shock

- Increased heart rate and pulse
- Reddish gum color
- Rapid capillary refill time (CRT)
- "Pounding" pulse
- Dog is most often alert

Middle Stages

- Pale gums
- Rapid breathing
- Cool ears and paws
- Low body temperature
- Weak, rapid pulse
- Prolonged CRT
- Woozy, weakened mental state

Late Stages

- Very pale or blue gums
- Slow respiratory and heart rate
- Weak or no pulse
- Depressed mental state, unconsciousness
- Stopped breathing, cardiac arrest

