

FIRST-AID KIT

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Assembling a canine first-aid kit for home or travel use is fairly simple. In fact, it's pretty easy to assemble a kit that will serve both human and canine members of your family!

Before reading further, know that I am *not* a veterinarian. The contents of my first-aid kit were assembled using common sense and my experiences with my own dogs. Dosage information listed here comes from *The Merck Manual* or from my own veterinarian.

PLEASE consult your own vet about appropriate uses and doses before giving your dog any of these medications. Also, be sure to become familiar with the side effects and adverse reactions before using any of these medications. While they are considered fairly safe and are not prescription medications, some dogs may react badly to some of these drugs.

The first thing you need for a good first-aid kit is a suitable container. We use a fishing tackle-type box. On the outside, with permanent marker, label the box "First Aid" on all sides; in an emergency, someone else might have to locate and use this kit. Tape a card to the inside of the box lid with the following information on it: your name, address and phone number; the name and phone number of someone to contact in an emergency who will take care of your dogs if you are incapacitated; your dogs' names and information about medications they take and allergies or significant medical conditions they have; the name and phone number of your veterinarian.

Also tape a card to the inside of the box lid with a list of common medications, their general dosages, and the specific dose for the weights of your own dogs. For example:

(NOTE: My dogs both weigh about 65 lbs.; yours may differ. List the actual doses needed for your *own* dogs' weights. Then they will be quickly and easily available and you won't have to search for a calculator or try to remember them when your dog needs medication.)

Never, ever give Tylenol (toxic to the liver) or ibuprofen (Nuprin, Motrin, Advil, etc.). Ibuprofen is very toxic and is fatal to dogs at low doses. Only aspirin is safe for dogs, and buffered aspirin or Ascriptin is preferred to minimize stomach upset.

Check with your vet to confirm dosages before using. If symptoms persist, consult your vet ASAP. Do *not* continue to try to treat at home, because the problem might be more serious than you think!

Give liquid medications using an oral syringe tucked into the side of the dog's mouth, holding jaws closed (rather than poking straight down the throat and risking getting liquid into the lungs).

It's also a good idea to keep copies of your dogs' vaccination records, including a copy of the rabies certificate, in the first-aid kit or in a packet in your car. I keep packets in *each* car and in my dog show equipment bag that contain records of shots, which heartworm preventative the dogs get and which day of the month it should be given, emergency contact information, and my vet's name and phone number. In addition, the emergency contact and vet information is clearly posted on my refrigerator door at home, where anyone who needs it can find it. You never know when you may be incapacitated in an accident, and your dogs may end up with a complete stranger who will need this information.

Also, don't forget when traveling with your dogs, they need to be immediately and easily identifiable. A collar with their call name is the easiest way to accomplish this.

- Benadryl: 1-2 mg per lb. every 8 hrs. (65-lb. dog, 2-4 25 mg tablets every 8 hrs.)
- Aspirin: 5 mg per lb. every 12 hrs. (one 325 mg tablet per 65-lb. dog per 12 hrs.)
- Hydrogen peroxide to induce vomiting: 1-3 tsp. every 10 min. until dog vomits
- Pepto-Bismol: 1 tsp. per 5 lb. per 6 hrs. (3-4 tbsp. per 65-lb. dog per 6 hrs.)
- Kaopectate: 1 ml per lb. per 2 hrs. (3-4 tbsp. per 65-lb. dog per 2 hrs.)
- Immodium: 1 mg per 15 lbs., 1-2 times daily
- Mineral oil (as a laxative): 5-30 ml per day; do not use long-term

ITEMS TO HAVE IN THE FIRST-AID KIT

- Cotton gauze bandage wrap, 1.5- and 3-inch width
- Vet Wrap, 2- and 4-inch width (4-inch is sold for horses)
- Ace bandage
- First-aid tape
- Cotton gauze pads
- Regular Band-Aids
- Cotton swabs or Q-Tips
- Benadryl
- Ascriptin (buffered aspirin)
- Pepto-Bismol tablets
- New-Skin liquid bandage (useful for patching abrasions on pads)
- Iodine tablets (if you hike and camp in areas where the stream water may not be safe for consumption without first treating with iodine or boiling)
- Oral syringes (for administering liquid oral medicines, getting ear-drying solution into ears, etc...very useful!)
- Needle and thread
- Safety pins in several sizes
- Razor blade (paper wrapped for protection)
- Matches
- Tweezers
- Hemostat (useful for pulling ticks, thorns, large splinters, etc.)
- Small, blunt-end scissors
- Canine rectal thermometer (get one that is made specifically for dogs)
- Antibiotic ointment (such as Bacitracin, Betadine, or others)
- Eye-rinsing solution (simple, mild eyewash)
- Small bottle of 3% hydrogen peroxide
- Small bottle of isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol or antiseptic wipes (in small individual packets)
- Small jar of Vaseline
- Specific medications *your dog may need* (for allergies, seizures, etc.)

Also have the following around the house, and consider packing to take on out-of-town trips:

- *Otomax (ointment for ear infections)
- *Chlorasone eye ointment (or a similar cortisone-antibiotic eye ointment)
- *Gentocin topical spray or a hydrocortisone topical spray (such as Cortaid brand)
- Ear-cleaning solution (Nolvasan Otic, Epi-Otic or your favorite), or a homemade ear-drying solution (1 part rubbing alcohol, 1 part white vinegar, 2 parts water)
- Otoscope (for examining ears)
- Epsom salts
- Hot spot remedy ingredients — whatever your favorite hot spot remedy is

Never travel with your Golden without everything you need to treat a hot spot.

Those supplies preceded by a * must be obtained from a veterinarian. All other supplies can be purchased, over the counter, at almost any drug store. Several dog supply catalogs, such as Drs. Foster & Smith, UPCO and Omaha Vaccine offer a variety of medical and first-aid supplies.

If your dog has severe allergies to bee stings or other things that might be commonly encountered in places you take your dog, consider asking your vet about stocking your first-aid kit with medication that might be needed for that sort of special emergency. Likewise, trackers and field trainers may want to consult their vet about equipping their first-aid kits with specific supplies to deal with snake bites.

Be sure to clearly *label* all medications and supplies with their name and expiration date. Be sure to replace medications that may have exceeded their recommended expira-

tion date. Go through your kit at least once a year, replacing expired medications, replenishing used supplies, etc. We do this right before going on vacation with the dogs, so we know the kit is updated and complete when we are traveling and away from close veterinary care.

For good descriptions and instructions about canine first aid: *Dog Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook*, by D. G. Carlson and J. M. Giffin, Howell Book House, 1980 (or a more recent edition?), ISBN 0-87605-764-4.

For more detail: *The Merck Veterinary Manual*, C. M. Fraser et al. (editors), published by Merck & Co., 7th Edition, 1991, ISBN 911910-55-7.

If in doubt, see your vet! Your dog's health is too precious to play gotta-save-money guessing games with! Remember, first aid is just that — the "first" aid given as you get the patient to a doctor for proper medical attention.