

# Knowing How to Do the Heimlich Maneuver Could Save Your Pet's Life in an Emergency

Every pet owner needs to know this life-saving information. It only takes a few minutes to learn, but the confidence you'll gain knowing exactly what to do if your pet chokes or stops breathing will be priceless. Always do this first, no matter what.

Analysis by [Dr. Karen Shaw Becker](#)

## STORY AT-A-GLANCE

- It's rare that a pet falls unconscious or stops breathing, but if your dog or cat ever should, knowing how to perform the Heimlich maneuver and CPR could save your furry companion's life
- In the case of a choking pet, you should first carefully check his mouth and throat for foreign objects. If you can't remove the obstruction by hand, you should attempt the Heimlich maneuver to dislodge it
- If your pet is not breathing and/or has no pulse, you'll want to clear the airway, give rescue breaths, and possibly chest compressions

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If your pet began choking or suddenly fell unconscious, would you know how to react? Many pet parents don't, and the panic that usually takes hold doesn't improve the situation.

During an emergency it's very important to remain calm. Your pet can sense your unease, which will raise stress levels all around and decrease the chance for a good outcome.

Of course, the first thing we recommend you do in the event of a crisis involving your pet is call your vet, a local emergency animal hospital, or an animal poison hotline if you think a toxin is involved.

But there are times when taking matters into your own hands may save your pet's life.

## Heimlich Maneuver for a Choking Pet

If your dog or cat is choking, you need to approach him carefully, as he's probably scared and more apt to bite. Say soothing things as you try to look and feel in his mouth and throat for the object he's choking on.

If you can pull the thing out, that's great, but if you can't see it or it's too far down to see or grasp, try to dislodge it using the Heimlich maneuver.

If your dog is large, stand behind him, wrap your arms around his belly close to his hips, and thrust your arms forward and up. If he's unconscious, you'll do the maneuver with him lying on his side, as demonstrated in the first video below.

If your pet is a small dog or cat, pick him up facing away from you, and gently tilt his body downward. Push forward and up on his belly using quick thrusts. You can also hold his back against your chest as you thrust upward as demonstrated in the second video.

Check your pet's mouth and remove any objects that have been dislodged, or repeat the maneuver as necessary.

- **Heimlich maneuver on a large dog**
- **Heimlich maneuver on a small dog or cat**

## **Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) for Pets**

Unfortunately, in-home pet CPR is not always effective, but it's certainly worth a try if your pet stops breathing.

First, lay your pet on her right side and check for breathing and a pulse. Check for a pulse using your middle and index finger below the wrist, inner thigh, below the ankle, or where the left elbow touches the chest.

If she's not breathing and she's a small dog or cat, place your mouth over the nose and mouth and blow air in. For medium to large dogs, hold the mouth closed, place your mouth over the nose and blow in. If air won't go in, perform the Heimlich maneuver as demonstrated above to try to dislodge whatever is blocking the airway.

If your pet has no pulse, start chest compressions. With your pet lying on her side, put your hands over her ribs where her elbow touches her chest. For cats and small dogs under 30 pounds, compress the chest 1/2 to 1 inch and do 5 compressions per 1 breath of air.

For dogs 30 to 90 pounds, compress the chest 1 to 3 inches, doing 5 compressions per 1 breath of air. For dogs over 90 pounds, compress chest 1 to 3 inches, and do 10 compressions for every 1 breath of air.

Check pulse after 1 minute and then every few minutes. Continue CPR until your pet has a pulse and is breathing again or you arrive at your vet's office or an emergency animal hospital.

### **Sources and References**

[Sioux City Journal August 2, 2014](#)

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