



Overview

Cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) for pets follows the same foundational principles as human CPR: restore breathing and circulation to a brain starved of oxygen. Knowing these steps can sustain a pet long enough to reach emergency care — it will not treat the underlying cause of arrest, but it buys critical time.

■ Pet CPR is a bridge — not a cure. Always have someone call the emergency vet while CPR is being performed, and transport immediately.

Signs That CPR May Be Needed

- Unconscious and unresponsive to sound or touch
- No visible chest movement / not breathing
- No heartbeat felt (place hand on left side of chest behind the elbow)
- Gums are blue, white, or gray (not pink)
- Pupils fixed and dilated (non-responsive to light)

The CAB Approach

■ Pet CPR follows C-A-B: **Compressions** → **Airway** → **Breathing**. Compressions first — getting blood moving is the priority.

Step-by-Step Pet CPR

Check for responsiveness: Call the pet's name, tap firmly. If no response, begin CPR.

Position the pet: Lay on a firm flat surface, right side down. Keep the neck extended.

Open the airway: Tilt the head back gently. Pull tongue forward. Check for visible obstructions.

Check for breathing: Watch for chest rise for 10 seconds. If none, begin rescue breaths.

Rescue breathing: For dogs: close the mouth, breathe into nose — 2 breaths watching for chest rise. For cats/small dogs: cover both nose AND mouth with your mouth — 2 gentle puffs.



Chest compressions: Place hands over the widest part of the chest. Compress 1/3 to 1/2 the chest width. Rate: 100–120/min. For cats and small dogs: use one hand, or two fingers. For barrel-chested breeds (Bulldogs): dorsal recumbency, compress the sternum.

Ratio: 30 compressions : 2 breaths. Do not stop to check pulse during cycles.

Check every 2 minutes: Pause briefly to check for pulse and spontaneous breathing.

Continue until: The pet breathes on its own, a pulse returns, or you reach the ER.

■ When to See a Veterinarian

■ **STAY CALM — stress directly worsens outcomes.** Pets are acutely sensitive to their owner's emotional state. Panic raises your pet's heart rate, worsens their pain response, and complicates exam and treatment. Take a breath. Speak softly and move with slow, deliberate efficiency. Getting to the ER calmly and quickly beats getting there panicked. **Your calm is part of the treatment.**

■ **THIS IS A VETERINARY EMERGENCY — GO NOW.** If your pet is showing any of the signs described in this guide, stop reading and drive directly to your nearest 24-hour emergency vet. Do not wait until morning. Do not call first. **Go immediately.**

A pet that experienced cardiac or respiratory arrest needs immediate emergency care even if CPR appears successful. The cause of the arrest must be identified and treated, and the animal requires monitoring for re-arrest.

■ Prevention & Preparedness

- Take a hands-on pet CPR/first aid course — technique matters and practice builds confidence
- Keep your emergency vet number in your phone contacts right now
- Know the nearest 24-hour vet hospital before an emergency happens
- Regular wellness exams catch heart and respiratory conditions before crisis

■ Final Summary

Pet CPR saves time — it keeps oxygen-carrying blood moving to the brain while you get to professional care. Know the steps, stay calm, and keep moving toward the emergency vet. Do not delay transport to continue CPR at home.

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■ **Related XVC Guides:**

- [Pet First Aid Guide](#) · [Building a Pet Emergency Kit](#)
- [When to Go to the Emergency Vet](#) · [NYC Emergency Vet Hospitals](#)



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