



■ Overview

One of the most common — and costly — mistakes pet owners make is waiting. Waiting to see if it gets better. Waiting until morning. Waiting to call the vet. In veterinary medicine, many emergencies are time-sensitive: the window for effective treatment closes within hours. This guide gives you a clear decision framework: when do you go now versus when can you wait for your regular vet?

■ ■ When in doubt — go. Emergency vets can always send you home if it turns out to be minor. You cannot undo waiting too long.

■ ■ Go to the Emergency Vet RIGHT NOW If:

- Difficulty breathing, gasping, or open-mouth breathing (cats)
- Uncontrolled bleeding that doesn't stop with 5 minutes of pressure
- Suspected poisoning or toxin ingestion
- Collapse, unresponsiveness, or loss of consciousness
- Seizures (especially lasting more than 2 minutes)
- Eye prolapse or sudden complete eye closure
- Swollen, distended abdomen with unproductive retching (GDV — dogs)
- Inability to urinate (especially male cats — can be fatal in hours)
- Suspected broken bones or internal injuries after trauma
- Any animal struck by a vehicle, even if it appears okay
- Suspected heat stroke
- Birthing complications (labor lasting more than 2 hours without delivery)
- Pale, white, gray, blue, or yellow gums



■ Call Your Regular Vet or Urgent Care (Same-Day) For:

■ Vomiting or diarrhea — 2+ episodes but pet is alert and drinking water

■ Limping but bearing some weight with no obvious deformity

■ Ear scratching, head shaking, mild discharge

■ Skin irritation or new lump that is small and not changing rapidly

■ Decreased appetite for 1–2 days with no other symptoms

■ Minor cuts or wounds that are not actively bleeding

■ **Not sure which category your situation falls into?** Xavier's Veterinary Care is here to help you think it through. Send us an email — whether it's a quick follow-up question, something your regular vet didn't have time to explain, or just a situation where you'd feel better talking it through with a licensed vet tech.

■ The Cost of Waiting

These are real conditions where hours — sometimes minutes — changed the outcome:

■ **GDV (Bloat):** 80%+ survival with early surgery. Under 50% if surgery is delayed more than 6 hours.

■ **Urethral obstruction in cats:** 24-hour survival without treatment is poor. Blockages are fatal within 24–48 hours.

■ **Lily toxicity in cats:** Kidney failure is preventable with treatment within 18 hours — very difficult to reverse after 24–48 hours.

■ **Aortic thromboembolism (cats):** Treatment within the first few hours dramatically improves outcomes and chances of limb recovery.

■ The Rule

■ **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.**



When to Go to the Emergency Vet

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■ Before You Need It

- ✓ Find your nearest 24-hour emergency vet TODAY. Put the address and phone number in your phone contacts as "Emergency Vet." Know how to get there at 2am.

■ Final Summary

The signs listed in the "Go Now" section are not subtle. When your pet has them, act immediately. Your instinct that something is very wrong is usually correct — trust it and go.

■ Related XVC Guides:

- [NYC Emergency Vet Hospitals](#) · [Pet First Aid Guide](#)
- [Pet CPR Basics](#) · [Building a Pet Emergency Kit](#)



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