

April Is National Pet First Aid Awareness Month

To many people, first aid for animals is just not a very interesting topic.

That is, until your dog or cat suddenly begins choking on a toy. Or is hit by a car, suffers a near drowning accident, or ingests one of the countless pet toxins found in the average home—from grapes to azaleas to acetaminophen to anything sweetened with xylitol. The fact is, animals are surrounded by hazards, and these hazards sometimes lead to serious accidents.

Are these terrible things *likely* to happen? Thankfully, the odds are in your favor that they won't. But I can assure you that anyone whose cat or dog has suffered a life-threatening accident no longer cares about odds.

What you do (or don't do) in the first moments following an accident can often be the difference between life and death. One such example is with choking. If your pet's airway is completely obstructed by an object, there will be no time to go to the veterinarian for help—you need to take immediate action.

Learning pet first aid not only can save your companion's life in an emergency but also will make you a more relaxed and confident guardian. In addition, also it can help you spot less obvious health issues by educating you on warning signs as well as providing information on animals' normal vital signs.

Here's what you need to do:

1. Sign up for a training course in your area. Check with your local Red Cross, humane organizations, or private companies such as [PetTech](#).
2. Buy a guide on pet first aid emergencies (most training courses include a guide). My favorites are the Red Cross' [Dog First](#)

[Aid](#) and [Cat First Aid](#), Pets America's [Pet First Aid & Disaster Response Guide](#), and my own book, [The Safe Dog Handbook](#).

3. Put together a pet first aid kit. Your guide will tell you how, or you can refer to PETA's recent post, "[Create Your Own Canine First Aid Kit](#)."

Preparing yourself for an emergency is a lot less daunting than it may seem. Put aside one day in your life for your pet's sake. Then you can relax and enjoy all the other national holidays to come.

The article is a guest post in honor of National Pet First Aid Awareness Month. It was written by Melanie Monteiro, a pet first aid instructor, dog safety consultant, and author of [The Safe Dog Handbook: A Complete Guide to Protecting Your Pooch, Indoors and Out](#).