

Pet CPR: if your dog or cat **stops breathing**

Only start CPR if your pet is not breathing and you can't feel a heartbeat. Get someone to drive you to the nearest emergency clinic while you work.

1 Check first

Call your pet's name and touch it. Watch its chest for breathing and put your hand on its chest to feel for a heartbeat, for no more than 10 to 15 seconds. If your pet is breathing, don't do CPR. Take it straight to the nearest vet.

2 Get help moving

Ask someone to call the nearest emergency clinic and get the car while you start. Keep going on the way, and let someone else drive.

3 Lay your pet down

Put cats and most dogs on their side. Put barrel-chested dogs, like bulldogs, on their back.

4 Place your hands

For most dogs, put the heels of both hands, one on top of the other, on the widest part of the chest. Lock your elbows and keep your shoulders over your hands. For deep, narrow-chested dogs like greyhounds, push just behind the armpit, over the heart. For a barrel-chested dog on its back, push on the middle of the breastbone. For cats and small dogs, wrap one hand around the bottom of the chest, with your thumb on one side and your fingers on the other.

5 Push hard and fast

Push 100 to 120 times a minute, about two pushes every second, to the beat of the song Stayin' Alive. Push the chest down by a third to a half of its width, or by a quarter if your pet is on its back. Let the chest come all the way back up after each push.

6 Give two breaths

After 30 pushes, hold your pet's mouth closed, put your mouth over its nose and blow for about one second, until you see the chest rise. Give two breaths, then go straight back to pushing. With two people, one pushes without stopping and the other gives a breath every six seconds.

7 Keep going

Check for breathing and a heartbeat every two minutes, and swap with your helper if you can, because pushing is tiring. Keep going until your pet breathes on its own or you reach the vet.

Be careful

Stop if your pet starts to respond. A hurt or frightened pet may bite, even a gentle one.

Learn this before you need it. The American Red Cross has an online cat and dog first aid course, and the RECOVER Initiative runs a CPR course for pet owners.

Write this down now

Nearest 24-hour clinic _____

Phone _____

Address _____