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## WHEN TO GO TO THE EMERGENCY HOSPITAL

Often times, as a pet owner, it's hard to know whether your pet's condition is a true medical emergency or not. Some emergencies can wait to see your regular veterinarian the following morning (like diarrhea, midnight health certificates, itchy skin, urinary tract infections, etc). However, there are certain situations where it is imperative that your pet goes to the animal ER, as sometimes it can be a potentially fatal problem without treatment.

Some signs that warrant you getting up in the middle of the night and getting to an emergency veterinarian ASAP include:

- Difficulty breathing, which may be manifested as blue gums, coughing of foamy, pink frothy liquid, panting constantly, or stretching the head and neck out while breathing
- Constant coughing and inability to rest through the night
- A distended, "bloated" abdomen
- Non-productive retching (which is classic for gastric dilation-volvulus)
- Anxiety or restlessness
- Pale gums (which is often seen with internal bleeding or anemia)
- Elevated heart rates (>160 beats per minute at home) or respiratory rates (>60 breaths per minute at rest)
- Crying out in pain
- Jaundice (yellow gums)
- Not being able to move or walk or dragging of the back legs
- Extreme lethargy
- Significant amounts of bleeding
- Any trauma
- Any poisoning or toxin ingestion
- Vomiting more than two or three times
- Abnormal vaginal discharge
- Fever
- Squinting, bulging or painful eyes
- Straining to urinate, making multiple trips to urinate, squatting to urinate without producing any urine
- Collapse, tremors or seizures
- Anything that makes you worried

In cats, there are some other things to look for:

- Difficulty breathing; like open-mouth breathing or respirations more than 50 breaths/minute.
- Straining to urinate or lack of urine in the litter box for more than 24 hours
- Excessive drooling
- Sitting over the water bowl and not moving
- Any string hanging out of any orifice (Seriously. Please don't pull it out)

While this list isn't complete, it's a good initial guideline. When in doubt, call your veterinarian, or the emergency veterinarian, for advice on whether you should bring your pet in. Often, the sooner a problem is diagnosed and treatment is started, the less expensive the problem will be.

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When in doubt, it's always safer to err on the side of caution.

### WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A VETERINARY EMERGENCY HOSPITAL

If you do decide that your pet needs emergency veterinary care, where should you take them? There are a few veterinary hospitals in the lower mainland that operate as emergency hospitals. These hospitals have met specific criteria which makes them ideal places for your pet to be treated in an emergency situation. There is a standardized guideline that specifies the minimum recommended equipment and supplies that any emergency and critical care veterinary hospital should have available for the treatment of emergency patients.

A veterinary emergency facility should have a licensed DVM on the premises during operating hours. There must also be sufficient staff available to provide expedient patient care. This will allow the performance of a wide range of life-saving procedures; including CPR and emergency surgery. Emergency patients also need constant supervision until they are discharged to their owners or to their regular veterinarian. Veterinarians and technicians in the emergency field should obtain ongoing continuing education in the field of emergency and critical care medicine. Standards of care in this field are always improving and it is essential to stay up to date with new information.

An emergency clinic will also maintain effective communications to allow efficient transfer of patient information to the primary care veterinarian or to specialists if that is required. This allows smooth ongoing care to the patient.

Some of the hospitals in the lower mainland which meet these criteria are:

The Vancouver Animal Emergency and Referral Centre  
2303 Alberta St. Vancouver, BC. 604-879-3737

Canada West Veterinary Specialists  
1988 Kootenay St. Vancouver, BC. 604-473-4882

Animal Emergency Hospital of the Fraser Valley  
#306 - 6325 204 St. Langley, BC. 604-514-1711

Intercity Animal Emergency Clinic  
580 SE Marine Dr. Vancouver, BC. 604-321-8080

**PLEASE NOTE: THERE ARE NO EMERGENCY HOSPITALS IN RICHMOND AT THIS TIME DESPITE WHAT MAY BE ADVERTISED**

While we always hope that these services will not be needed, we understand how much you care for your pet and want you to have the best possible treatments in the case of any emergencies. If you have any questions about what constitutes an emergency, what first aid measures you can provide and which emergency facilities we recommend, please do not hesitate to call us.

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