

# Emergency or Non Emergency? That is the Question!

There can be many things that occur after “normal business hours” that may be concerning to pet owners. Cats and dogs can have a variety of symptoms that may or may not need immediate evaluation and treatment by a veterinarian. This document is meant to help you understand which cases need to be seen right away vs. which ones can wait until a little later.

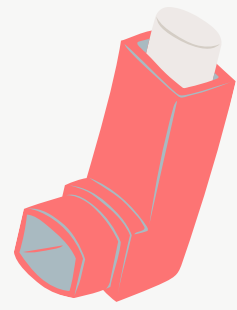
Please note that this list is not exhaustive, nor can any one pet be definitively diagnosed based on one-line descriptions as provided below.

## EMERGENCY:

*The following symptoms are possible signs of a true emergency and should be evaluated by a veterinarian right away.*

### Trouble breathing

- Defined as a respiratory rate of 50 breaths per minute or greater that is NOT panting
- Open-mouth breathing in a cat is always considered an emergency
- Exaggerated, loud, or noisy breathing in brachycephalic (smushy-faced) cats or dogs that is new
- Abdominal heaving noted with every breath
- Neck extended to breathe



### Weakness, staggering, shaking, & mobility issues

- Sudden and profound weakness or collapse
- Inability to walk or suddenly staggering as if drunk or unsteady on their feet, sudden trouble going up or down the stairs
- Acting disoriented and/or mentally “off” or inappropriate
- Shaking abnormally, restless, pacing, inability to get comfortable or rest
- Seizures or tremors
- Sudden limping or loss of motor function in one or more limbs – ESPECIALLY in a cat

### Inappropriate urinating, defecating, diarrhea and vomiting

- Straining to defecate or urinate - ESPECIALLY in male cats
- No urinations noted in more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea that has progressed to pure liquid, blood, or black and has happened 2 or more times in 24 hours with loss of appetite and/or decreased energy and/or vomiting
- Retching/trying to vomit without producing anything; or distension of the abdomen where it is noticeably larger and more firm and/or tense than usual
- Vomiting 3 or more times in a 24 hour period with loss of appetite and/or decreased energy and/or concurrent diarrhea

### Bleeding, wounds & trauma

- Ongoing bleeding- ESPECIALLY bleeding that occurs with every heartbeat (i.e. spurting)
- Bite or puncture wounds along the neck, chest, or abdomen
- Severe trauma such as being hit by a car, falling from a high surface, being stepped on



### Suspected exposure to any toxin or medication

*(always call Poison Control first!)*

- Xylitol – dogs
- Lilies – cats
- Grapes/raisins – dogs
- Chocolate (dose dependent) – cats and dogs
- Antifreeze – cats and dogs
- Insulin overdose
- Rodenticide/rat poison
- Over the counter OR prescribed medication that has not been specifically prescribed for your pet – call Poison Control for advice on whether pet needs to be seen (human medications such as Tylenol (acetaminophen) can be safe for humans but deadly for cats)



### Abnormal appearances or behavior (skin, gums, eyes & nose)

- White or blue gums or gums that appear bright red
- Sudden appearance of bruises or small purplish dots along the body without any history of trauma
- Excruciating pain or vocalizing
- Facial swelling or hives
- Bulging eyes or sudden blindness
- Squinting eyes suddenly
- Fever at home (temperature > 102.5) in presence of other symptoms (ie lethargy, anorexia for > 24 hours, etc)



## WAIT FOR AN APPOINTMENT:

The following are symptoms that may be safe to wait until morning to see your regular vet, or can visit an emergency hospital if the symptoms have not improved by the next day. No single symptom can be universally defined as a true emergency or non-emergency without a veterinarian to evaluate the patient directly; if you are at all concerned or unsure of how serious your pet's symptoms may be, always err on the side of caution and have them evaluated sooner than later.



- **Coughing** without signs of labored breathing and able to rest (i.e. cough is not affecting quality of life at home)
- **Sneezing**, runny nose
- **Not eating** anything for less than 24 hours
- **Vomiting once or twice** within 24 hours but acting normal
- **One or two episodes of diarrhea** within 24 hours but acting normal
- **Limping** (note - some forms of lameness are more serious than others, especially in adult cats, so please call a veterinarian depending on more specific details pertaining to your pet at the time)
- **Itchy skin or ears**, or thickness/fluid pocket within an ear
- **Torn toenail** with minor to no bleeding
- **New lumps** or bumps identified on your pet (that do not resemble hives which is an emergency)
- **Ticks/Fleas**
- **Worms seen in stool** in absence of other clinical signs (especially in puppies, kittens, and outdoor cats)

**You know your pet best. If you notice anything out of the ordinary, please don't hesitate to contact us or your nearest emergency clinic.**



**ReadiVet**  
2535 Cedar Springs Rd. Dallas, TX 75201  
(469) 369-2456

### Business Hours

Mon-Fri	9:00am - 6:00pm
Saturday	Closed
Sunday	Closed

