

Should I call the vet?

Raising a Golden
raisingagolden.com

A one-page dog symptom guide for owners. If your dog fits more than one tier, go with the most urgent. If you're not sure, call.

Go to an emergency vet now

Call ahead on the way if you can, so the team can get ready.

- Trouble breathing: fast or hard breathing at rest, open-mouth breathing, noisy breaths, a stretched-out neck
- Pale, white, gray, blue or purple gums
- Collapse, fainting, sudden weakness, can't stand or use a leg
- A swollen belly, or retching with nothing coming up
- A seizure over 5 minutes, or 2 or more within 24 hours
- Ate something poisonous, or something that could cause a blockage (sock, toy, bone, stone)
- Heatstroke signs after heat or exercise: heavy panting, drooling, weakness, vomiting, collapse
- Straining to pee with little or nothing coming out, or bloody urine
- Heavy bleeding, deep wounds, burns or a snake bite
- Hit by a car, a fall or being crushed, even if your dog seems fine
- An eye injury, a bulging eye, or a painful eye held shut
- Unresponsive, confused or not reacting to your voice
- Severe pain: crying out, shaking, refusing to move
- Facial swelling or hives with vomiting or breathing trouble

Symptom	Call your vet today	Watch at home and call if it changes
Vomiting	Blood or coffee-ground vomit (call right away). Vomiting more than once, or with low energy, belly pain, fever, diarrhea, not eating or sticky gums.	One vomit, dog otherwise well. Call if it happens again or they're not right after 24 hours.
Diarrhea	Blood or mucus, watery or constant, other signs, or lasting over 24 hours. Any puppy, senior, or dog with a health condition or on medication.	Mild, under 24 hours, in an adult who's otherwise well. Keep fresh water out.
Not eating	Nothing eaten for over 24 hours. Less appetite with weight loss, low energy, vomiting, diarrhea, or yellow skin or eyes.	Not for long. A hungry dog who struggles to chew may have mouth pain.
Swollen belly or retching	Go now. Not sure it's swollen and your dog is acting normally? Call right away.	Never.
Breathing	Sleeping breathing rate stays above about 30 a minute after a few recounts.	Panting after exercise, excitement, stress or a warm day. Let them settle and count again.
Coughing	A cough that keeps coming back or won't clear up. Coughing at night or with less stamina: call right away.	A single cough. Note when it happens and call if it repeats.
Pale gums	Go now. Any abnormal gum color needs immediate care.	Learn your dog's normal gum color on a calm day.
Seizures	A first-ever seizure, even a short one. Call as soon as it ends.	During it: move things away, don't hold your dog down, keep hands away from the mouth. Time it and film part.
Collapse or weakness	Collapse: go now. A head tilt or wobbly walk in a dog who's alert and standing: call.	Never for collapse.
Behavior changes	A friendly dog who suddenly snaps, hides or seems very fearful. Low energy. Pain signs: arched back, low head, pacing, panting at rest, licking one spot.	Not a wait-and-see sign. Take photos, video and notes for the vet.
Eyes	Redness, swelling, discharge, cloudiness, extra blinking, third eyelid showing. Painful eye: ask for an urgent appointment.	Not a wait-and-see sign. Eye problems can cost your dog their sight.
Ears	More head shaking or ear scratching, a bad smell, discharge, a swollen earflap, a head tilt or loss of balance. A head tremor: call straight away.	An occasional head shake or ear scratch.
Itching and skin	Scratching, licking or nibbling more than normal. A wound that's red, swollen, hot or oozing pus.	An occasional scratch.
Lumps	Any new lump. An old lump that grows, changes, bleeds or bothers your dog. Pea-sized for a month: ask about a needle sample.	Check for lumps weekly. If your vet asks you to monitor one, photograph and measure it monthly.
Limping	Any limp or stiffness, even a mild one. Can't put a leg down or severe pain: go now.	Not a wait-and-see sign. Keep your dog quiet.
Bleeding and wounds	Any bite wound, however small. A wound that looks infected. Bleeding that won't stop after 10 minutes: go now.	A minor cut or graze: keep it clean and dry, and stop licking.
Poison or swallowed object	Always call now. Don't make your dog vomit unless your vet or poison control says to. Bring the packaging.	Never.
Heatstroke	Go now. Cool on the way: shade, cool (not ice-cold) water, the car's air conditioning.	Never.
Peeing and drinking	Drinking or peeing more than usual, or accidents from a house-trained dog. Never cut back water.	Drinking a bit more after exercise, on a hot day, or after a switch from wet to dry food.

Normal numbers

100.0 to 102.5°F temperature (VCA). Above 104°F or below 99°F is an emergency.

15 to 30 breaths a minute asleep or resting (Texas A&M). Count 30 seconds, then double it.

Gum check

Lift the lip: healthy gums are pink. Press, let go: pink returns in 1 to 2 seconds.

Sticky gums: a sign of dehydration.

Pale, white, gray, blue or purple: go now.

Poison lines (24/7)

Call your vet or emergency clinic first if you can.

ASPCA Animal Poison Control
(888) 426-4435

Pet Poison Helpline
(855) 764-7661
Fees apply.

Write it down

My vet:

Nearest 24/7 emergency vet:

No human medicine unless your vet says to.