

# How to Stop Bleeding From a Laceration or Wound

## BACKGROUND

Injuries may occur while a pet is outside playing, hiking with owners, involved in an altercation with another animal, or in many other situations. Serious injuries may bleed and require first-aid treatment until your pet can be transported to a veterinarian.

It can be a valuable asset to have a first-aid kit available at home or while traveling. These kits can hold bandaging materials for serious wounds, allowing the owner to apply a pressure bandage when needed.

## GETTING STARTED

Equipment/materials needed:

- Telfa pads (nonstick gauze or material): ideal but not indispensable
- Cotton gauze
- Vetrap, Elastikon/Elastoplast, or Ace-type elastic roll bandage
- Bandaging tape
- Gloves

## TROUBLESHOOTING BEFOREHAND

If the bleeding is heavy, it is most important to place a pressure bandage on the area of concern to control the bleeding. You can then transport your pet to the veterinarian for evaluation. Tape will not stick to a moist haircoat; therefore, be sure to dry the area as well as possible.

This procedure may require two people. Pets may resist the need for restraint. Do not place yourself in harm's way or allow yourself to get bitten.

## PROCEDURE

- Apply a Telfa pad, if available, over the laceration. This allows for easier bandage removal. Hold moderate pressure on the laceration while bandaging.
- Apply a layer of cotton bandage material.
  - If the laceration is on the leg, start below the wound and wrap the cotton bandage material up the leg and over the wound, stopping above the wound.
  - If the laceration is on the chest, a figure-eight formation over the shoulder blades and around the front of the chest between the front legs ("cross-your-heart" configuration) may be needed to secure the bandage.
  - If the laceration is on the abdomen (belly), apply the pressure bandage around the entire abdomen, making sure to avoid incorporating the penis in male dogs.
- Apply a layer of Vetrap or similar bandage by repeating the steps listed above with the Vetrap/similar bandage to solidify the bandage. If there is minor or no bleeding, the wrap should not be overly tight. Vetrap is often much tighter than you think if applied right off the roll – keep this in mind to avoid constricting blood flow.
- A pressure bandage is necessary to stop any vigorous bleeding; therefore, the bandage should not be too loose. A pressure

bandage is intended to be temporary, allowing for transport to your veterinarian. Be sure to leave the toes exposed (if on a leg) and the chest not excessively compressed (if on the chest). The toes should remain pink (not pale/white/blue), warm (not cold), and not swollen, to confirm that circulation to the leg is adequate and the bandage is not too tight.

- Apply a piece of bandaging tape to the top and bottom of the bandaging material where it meets the pet's hair or skin. This will help keep the bandage in place while traveling to the veterinary hospital.

## AFTERWARDS

With any leg bandage, assess your pet's bandaged paw for any swelling twice daily, and immediately if any abnormality (worsening limping, visible fluid discharge) is apparent. The toes will be the first to swell if a bandage is too tight. If the toes swell, remove the bandage and start over.

Depending on the wound, the veterinarian may have you apply several bandages after the treatment and/or surgery. Do not wrap follow-up bandages as tightly as the initial bandage if the initial bandage was a pressure wrap to stop the bleeding. A bandage that is excessively tight and is left on for hours or days after the bleeding has stopped can cause severe tissue damage. Ensure follow-up bandages are loose (should be able to place a finger inside the bandage), but secure.

Never let the animal eat the bandage or lick the laceration. Apply an Elizabethan collar, if needed.



Properly placed bandage on a dog's hind paw.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### *Should I apply an antibiotic cream to the area?*

Not with bleeding. The most important point is to stop the bleeding; apply the pressure bandage as soon as possible.

### *Should I wear gloves when cleaning the area?*

Yes, you should always wear gloves when working with any wound. This will prevent you from becoming contaminated with bacteria and will prevent you from contaminating the wound. However, in

an emergency situation, medical exam gloves may not be available, and controlling the bleeding is the first priority.

### *What if I don't have a first aid kit available?*

Applying pressure is the key to controlling bleeding. A clean towel, T-shirt, or other material can be used to wrap a bleeding wound until you can get your pet to veterinary care.

## OTHER RELATED INFORMATION SHEET

- [How to Assemble and Use an Elizabethan Collar](#)

Practice Stamp or Name & Address

Also available in Spanish.