



FRACTURES - EMERGENCY CARE

What is a Fracture?

A fracture is a broken bone. It can be classified a number of ways: 1) Greenstick (goes part way into the bone); 2) Simple (the bone fragments are under intact skin); 3) Compound or Open (the bone splinter is exposed through a break in the skin); 4) Comminuted (multiple fragments).

What is the Emergency Care for a Fracture?

Emergency care is designed to prevent further injury to the pet and control hemorrhage, shock, and pain. Usually besides the physical examination of the pet, radiographs (xrays) will be needed to determine type and severity of the fracture. Sometimes the care of the fracture must be considered secondarily to the problems of shock, hemorrhage, or internal trauma.

Your emergency doctor will consult you on the various aspects of your pet's immediate care. The broken bone itself will be stabilized if the area involved allows bandaging or splinting. This holds the bone fragments so they are unlikely to lacerate soft tissues like nerves and blood vessels and decreases associated pain and hemorrhage. If the area is not one that can be splinted, the pet must be kept quiet. This is best done by confining them to a small area (carrier or crate). Often it is best to leave your pet in a hospital until the fracture repair can be done by your veterinarian.

Where Can I Get Help?

Call your regular veterinarian. If the fracture occurs during regular business hours, your veterinarian will help you. If your clinic is closed, stay on the phone line to get the number of the closest Emergency Clinic. The repair of the fracture may be done a number of ways depending on the type of break, but it must be done when the danger of shock has passed.

How Did My Pet Get a Broken Bone?

Most fractures result from sudden forceful trauma—hit by a car, falling from a height, or small pet shaken by a large dog. Some fractures can result from weakened or diseased

bone—improperly balance diet, bone cancer, or infection of the bone. Often the radiographs can help in determining the cause of the fracture.

Home Care for Splints or Bandages

If your pet is sent home with a protective bandage or splint, watch carefully for any of these signs of a problem:

- Excessive chewing at the splint, especially if it was leaving it alone at first.
- Pain associated with the splinted limb.
- Swelling of the toes.
- Bad odor originating from the splint.

Some tips on keeping your pet safe while it is waiting for the repair of its fracture:

- DO NOT allow your pet to get the splint wet. Cover the splint with heavy plastic to take the pet outside.
- DO NOT bathe the pet while it is wearing a splint.
- DO NOT give any aspirin, Tylenol, Advil, or any other medication unless directed to do so by a veterinarian.
- Splints and bandages are temporary aids but are usually inadequate for complete bone healing. Your pet should be examined by your veterinarian as soon as possible.

Special instructions: _____

Thank you for this opportunity to serve you!