



Feline CPR: Cat-Related Emergency Planning

CPR is often taught for dogs but cats are often more prone to swallowing items in the home and tend to go into shock more easily and with fewer visible symptoms compared to dogs. Cat CPR is basically the same as for small dogs, but due to their small size and often laid-back nature, cats are more difficult to diagnose than dogs.

Cat CPR is used to treat a kitty who is not breathing or has little or no heartbeat. Also called mouth-to-nose resuscitation, this procedure involved the three vital principles for proper CPR known as the “ABC’s” of CPR. These are noted as “Airway,” “Breathing,” and “Circulation.

Airway: *Is the airway blocked?*

1. Lay kitty down on his right side with the feet facing you.
2. Gently tilt the head back in order to straighten out the neck and head.
3. Gently but firmly pull the tongue between the front teeth.
4. Use your finger to check for any objects or vomit and remove it (Be careful—kitty may be scared and bite you out of fear.)

Breathing: *Is the kitty breathing? If not, do the following.*

1. Open up the airway.
2. Cup your hands over the mouth and nose allowing your lips to form a seal to deliver breaths to the cat. Place your mouth over the cat’s mouth and nose.
3. Give four or five short breaths, rapidly, then check to see if the cat is breathing normally. If so, stop at this point and call your vet ASAP.
4. Plan for 20-30 breaths per minute.
5. If the breathing remains slow or shallow, continue with respirations until you reach a vet hospital or for the maximum of 20 minutes. (If resuscitation is needed for more than 20 minutes there is less a likelihood the cat will survive, but let your vet determine this).

Circulation: *Does the cat have a good heartbeat or pulse? If not, do the following.*

1. Lay the cat on his right side with its feet pointed towards you. (Try to get a second person to help with breaths while you perform chest compressions)
2. Kneel with the cat’s chest facing you, place the palm of your hands over its ribs at the point where its elbow touches the chest. Place your other hand underneath the right side of the cat.
3. Compress the chest 1/2-1 inch strokes.
4. Alternate chest compressions with breaths.
5. Perform two chest compressions for each breath, then check again for a pulse.
6. With two people, one person can deliver breaths while the other performs the compressions at about two compressions for each breath, then check for pulse.

(NOTE: Normal pulse rates for a cat range 160-200 beats per minute or roughly three beats per second)

CAT CPR Quick Chart

Below is a good feline CPR chart noting CPR actions and timing per the *American Red Cross Cat First Aid Safety Series, Booklet Volume 3. The Red Cross Dog First Aid booklet, Volume 2*, also includes a good discussion for dog CPR.

Breaths to compression ratios

- 1 breath, then 5 compressions for 1 rescuer.
- 1 breath, then 3 compressions for 2 rescuers.

Breathing position

- Cover and seal the cat’s mouth and nose with your mouth, then gently exhale until you see the chest rise.

Breathing rate

- Give 4-5 breaths rapidly, then check to see if the cat is breathing on its own.
- Give 20-30 breaths per minute.

Compression position

- With the cat’s chest facing you, place one hand over the top and the other hand under his ribs, just behind the front legs.
- Squeeze your hands together.
- Compress the chest 1/2-1 inch each time.

Compression rate

- Perform 120-150 chest compressions per minute (2-3 per second).

How long should you perform CPR?

- Perform breaths and compressions then pause and check for breathing and pulse every two to three minutes.
- If no pulse, continue CPR until reasonable breathing has returned, along with a good pulse and heartbeat.
- Plan for up to 20 minutes of this process. If still no response after 20 minutes, this usually yields a low success rate.

Feline Shock

Any animal can go into shock when in a life-threatening situation, but cats are so small and usually relaxed we need to be able to quickly diagnose changes in their systems that are not so obvious. The following is a quick list of items that may lead into full cardiopulmonary arrest or distress. If you believe your kitty is in shock, try to get the cat to a vet ASAP before full CPR is needed.

- Increased heart rate
- Increased pulse intensity (pounding)
- Weak or absent pulse
- Mucous membranes redder than normal
- Body temps may be much lower or higher than normal
- Cool limbs
- Mentally lethargic or non-responsive to your voice
- Physically lethargic or slow breathing rate

You perform CPR for cats basically the same as for small dogs but you must be able to spot the shock symptoms and administer the CPR slightly differently. Compression rates for cats reach 2-3 per second compared to larger dogs at less than two per second. Also, larger dogs require more compressions in between breaths. ■