



FREE CHECKLIST

Normal or **Vet?** 25 Signs

A quick reference for dog owners: what's usually fine to watch at home, and what means it's time to call the vet — with the level of urgency for each sign.

 **Vet now**

 **Vet in 24–48h**

 **Watch & log**



Vet now — these are emergencies

Call your vet or the nearest emergency animal hospital right away. Don't wait to see if it passes.

1 Ate grapes, raisins, chocolate, xylitol, onion or garlic

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: ASPCA

2 Struggling to breathe, or pale, white, blue or gray gums

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: AVMA

3 Collapse, can't stand, or unusually unresponsive

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: AVMA

4 A seizure

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

5 Trying to vomit but nothing comes up, or a swollen, hard belly

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

6 Blood in vomit, or vomit like coffee grounds

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

7 Black, tarry poop, or a lot of blood in it

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

8 Sudden face or muzzle swelling, or hives

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals



Vet now — continued

9

Any accident: hit by a car, a bad fall or a dog fight

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: AVMA

10

Suddenly wobbly or dragging back legs

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

11

Choking, or pawing at the mouth as if something is stuck

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: AVMA

12

Straining to pee with little or nothing coming out

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

13

Sudden head tilt, loss of balance or circling

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

14

Heavy panting, drooling or wobbling in heat or after exercise

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

15

Swallowed a toy, sock, bone or other object

Call your vet or the nearest emergency vet clinic now.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

17 Vet in 24–48 hours

Not an emergency, but book a visit soon. If it gets worse, or a 🚑 sign above appears, go now.

16 Drinking or peeing a lot more than usual

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

17 Vomiting more than twice in a day, or for more than a day

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

18 Diarrhea lasting more than 1–2 days

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

19 Open sores, pus or a bad smell on the skin

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

20 Won't put any weight on a leg

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: AKC

21 A cough that lasts more than a few days or gets worse

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: AKC

22 A smelly, red or oozing ear

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

23 Red, swollen or bleeding gums

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: VCA Animal Hospitals

24 Low energy that lasts more than a day

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: AKC

25 No food for more than 24 hours (12 for puppies)

Book a vet visit within 24–48 hours.

Source: AKC

👁️ Everything else — watch & log

A single mild episode of most of the above — one vomit, a little extra itching, one loose stool — isn't automatically an emergency. This is not an all-clear, though.

Watch your dog closely and write down what you see. If it lasts more than a day or two, keeps coming back, gets worse, or any 🚑 / 🏠 sign from this list shows up, call your vet.

What to log:

- What you saw, and when it started
- How often it's happening
- Anything that changed recently (food, treats, walks, products)
- A photo or short video — it helps your vet a lot

Want this personalized to your dog?

Follow [@mydogexplains](#) on Instagram for the free "Is this normal?" dog health app — pick what your dog is doing and get a clear urgency level, explained in your dog's own voice.

SOURCES

ASPCA ([aspcas.org](https://www.aspcas.org)) · AVMA ([avma.org](https://www.avma.org)) · VCA Animal Hospitals ([vcahospitals.com](https://www.vcahospitals.com)) · AKC ([akc.org](https://www.akc.org))

Not veterinary advice. In an emergency, contact your vet or an emergency animal hospital, or ASPCA Animal Poison Control (888) 426-4435.

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