

Choking

Family Matters

Few emergencies are as frightening as seeing your pet struggling to breathe because something is stuck in their throat.

One moment they're happily chewing a toy or eating.

The next they're coughing, gagging or pawing desperately at their mouth.

The first few minutes are critical.

At Amity, we believe that recognising true choking and acting quickly can save lives. Our purpose is to **Empower You Through Education**, helping you know what to do in this rare but genuine emergency.

Is My Pet Really Choking?

Many pets cough or gag from time to time.

This is very different from true choking.

A pet that is coughing is still moving air.

A pet that is truly choking may be unable to breathe at all.

Signs of choking include:

- Pawing frantically at the mouth.
- Difficulty breathing.
- Gagging with little or no sound.
- Blue, grey or pale gums.
- Panic.
- Collapse.

If your pet is coughing but breathing normally, they are less likely to be choking completely.

What Causes Choking?

Common causes include:

- Bones.
- Balls that are too small.
- Chews.

- Sticks.
- Pieces of toys.
- Food lodged in the throat.
- Occasionally swelling from an allergic reaction.

Some dogs are simply more enthusiastic eaters than others and are therefore at greater risk.

What Should I Do?

If your pet is conscious:

- Stay as calm as possible.
- Contact your veterinary practice immediately.
- If it is safe to do so, gently open the mouth and **only remove an object if it is clearly visible and easy to grasp.**

Never blindly put your fingers deep into your pet's mouth.

You may push the object further down or be bitten accidentally.

What If They Collapse?

If your pet becomes unconscious:

- Check whether anything is visible in the mouth.
- If it can be removed easily, do so.
- If they are not breathing and have no heartbeat, begin CPR if you know how while someone contacts the veterinary practice.

Transport your pet immediately, continuing CPR if necessary.

What Will the Vet Do?

Our first priority is restoring your pet's airway.

Depending on the situation, this may involve:

- Oxygen therapy.
- Sedation or a general anaesthetic.
- Removing the object using specialised instruments.
- Endoscopy.
- Surgery in severe cases.

Once the obstruction has been removed, we'll also assess for any damage to the mouth, throat or windpipe.

Prevention Is Better Than Treatment

Many choking emergencies can be prevented by:

- Choosing toys appropriate for your pet's size.
- Supervising pets when they chew.
- Avoiding cooked bones.
- Replacing damaged toys before pieces break off.
- Discouraging dogs from carrying sticks.

A toy that's too small for your dog is a choking hazard, not a toy.

Every Second Counts

True choking is uncommon, but when it happens, it requires immediate action.

The important thing is to stay calm, avoid making the obstruction worse and seek veterinary help without delay.

At Amity, we'd rather you call us immediately if you suspect choking than wait to see if your pet improves.

Because when a pet can't breathe, every second matters.

Because they're not just your pet.

They're family.

Family Matters.

If you need more information, book an appointment with an Amity vet. We're here to Empower You Through Education and help you become your pet's greatest advocate.