

Avian First Aid for Common Bird Emergencies

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Unfortunately, it is impossible to anticipate and prevent every accident. With advance preparedness, however, you can certainly reduce pain and suffering, and may some day even save the life of your bird. First, you should establish a relationship with a local avian veterinarian who will advise you regarding routine care, and be available should an emergency arise. Second, you should assemble an avian first aid kit, familiarizing yourself with its contents and instructions, and practice procedures for the most common injuries.

First Aid Kit Contents

Your kit should include:

- Veterinary clinic number and directions to the clinic. Also, keep contact information for the veterinarian visible in your home, and carry a copy in your wallet. In an emergency, call ahead so your veterinarian will be ready when you arrive. Also, keep a back-up clinic number and directions should your regular veterinarian be unavailable.
- A [travel cage](#).
- Phone number of your local poison control authority.
- Scissors or [grooming tools](#) to remove string caught on your bird or to cut bandage material.
- Sterile gauze or telfa pads to place over cleaned wounds to prevent contamination.
- Q-tips to clean wounds and apply ointments.
- Tape.

- Roll of gauze for wrapping an injured wing.
- An antibiotic ointment to apply to cleaned wounds.
- Betadine or chlorhexidine (Nolvasan) to clean wounds.
- [Styptic powder](#) or sticks to help stop bleeding.
- Pliers or [hemostats](#) to help remove wire, string, or other foreign objects that may be caught on your pet, or to remove blood feathers.
- Heating pad, bottle, or [lamp](#) to help maintain her body heat.
- Thermometer to measure the temperature of your bird's environment.
- Towels of appropriate size for your bird to provide padding or restraint. These can also be used as a cage cover if she needs to be calmed.
- Medicine dropper or feeding [syringe](#).
- Serene-UM for Birds, an anti-stress formula to help calm your bird.



Home-Care Instructions for Common Injuries

Broken blood feathers can cause what appears to be a lot of blood loss. They are relatively easy to treat. Pack the broken shaft with [styptic powder](#) or flour. Apply minimal pressure with a gauze or telfa pad while traveling to the veterinarian. At the clinic, the veterinarian will probably pull out the bleeding shaft. If you have been shown how to do this, it is something you can do at home. The bleeding normally stops after the shaft has been removed.

Cat or dog attack can be terrifying to your bird and always requires assistance from a veterinarian. If a bleeding wound results, at home apply direct pressure with a gauze pad, but do not restrict breathing. Because mouths and teeth carry infection-causing bacteria, wounds must be cleaned and treated by your veterinarian. Even if no wounds are visible, your bird can easily have experienced an internal wound. Look for broken bones. If a wing is broken, wrap both wings loosely to the body with gauze, and then tape to prevent further injury from wing flapping. Do not tape tightly or the bird will not be able to breathe. If skull or leg bones are broken, do not attempt to treat at home as further damage may occur. Handle your bird calmly, and keep her quiet and warm, to avoid adding to her stress.



Small wounds or superficial abrasions can be cleaned at home with betadine or hydrogen peroxide. Use a tweezer to remove any dirt or feathers. Then apply a small amount of anti-bacterial ointment. It should heal within a couple of days. Do not allow your bird to pick at it. In case of deeper cuts or wounds, seek veterinary advice as further treatment may be necessary.

Bleeding from the tongue can be serious. To help prevent injury, check the cage regularly for loose wire, broken toys, or other sharp objects, and watch your bird carefully when she is out of her cage. Because her tongue contains many blood vessels it may bleed profusely if injured. Seek veterinarian attention immediately. Never apply styptic to her tongue.

Bleeding toenails are easy to treat with a styptic stick or powder. The bleeding should stop within a minute or so. If the bleeding does not stop, take your bird to the veterinarian.

Breathing trouble can occur for many reasons. First, check your bird's nostrils for blockage. If mucus is present, wipe it away with a damp cloth. Next, look for other blockages such as seeds or dirt. Because the operculum, a small part of the birds anatomy inside of the nostril can easily be mistaken for a foreign body, have your veterinarian examine and remove any suspected blockage. Panting or open-mouth breathing can be caused by overheating due to fright, exercise, environmental temperature, or illness. Overheated birds can develop heatstroke. In these cases she may also hold her wings outstretched from her body, pant heavily, and even collapse. Allow your bird to remain quiet in a cooler place. Mist your bird with cool water and have her stand on a cold wet towel. Don't cool your pet down too fast. Contact your veterinarian to determine if further treatment is needed.

Burns require fast attention. Run cold water over the affected area for several minutes. Then dry the area gently with gauze and apply cold compresses. If the burn is severe or extensive, your bird may go into shock. Symptoms can include weakness, rapid breathing, pale mucous membranes, and possibly collapse. For all burns, call your veterinarian. He or she will determine whether a clinic visit is necessary and will likely prescribe antibiotics to prevent infection.

Chills result from external and internal causes, or both. Your bird will literally shiver. First, determine the cause of the chilling. If it is due to illness or injury seek immediate veterinary attention. If it is due to environmental conditions such as power outage or drafts, fix the problem or relocate your bird. To warm your bird use a heat lamp or hot water bottle wrapped in a towel. Take extreme care to not burn your pet. Monitor the air temperature to avoid overheating.

Poisoning can easily be fatal. If the toxin is inhaled such as fumes from a Teflon® pan, remove your bird to a well-ventilated area. If your bird had external contact with a poison, such as insect sprays, bathe her immediately. If your bird ingested a toxin, such as a plant or a household cleaner, get the name of the toxin. Any time poisoning is thought to be a possibility, the veterinarian or Poison Control Center will need to know the name of the toxin, the active ingredients, the weight of your bird, how much was



consumed, when the exposure occurred, and any symptoms your pet currently is showing.

Summary

Any time an injury or illness occurs, the first thing to do is to prevent further injury. Get your first aid kit ready now.