In a life-and-death situation when every minute counts for an animal, you can call the ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center for 24-hour emergency information at 888-4ANI-HELP (888-426-4435).

Emergency Care

- Air Sac Rupture
- Bleeding
- Broken Beaks
- Burns
- Chicks: Orphaned / Abandoned
- Dehydration / Emergency Feeding / Nutrition for Sick Birds
- Diarrhea
- Eye Injury / Problems
- Frost Bites
- Heavy Metal Poisoning (Zinc, Lead, etc.)
- Labored Breathing / Respiratory Problems
- Overheating / Heat Stroke
- Seizures
- Toxic Exposure (inhalation / ingestion / contact with skin)
- Vomiting
- Bite Wounds
- Broken Legs / Toes / Wings
- Crop Burns
- Egg Binding
- Hydration Therapy for Babies
- Loss of Appetite / Anorexia
- Oil Contamination of Feathers
- Poison / Toxins
- Shock

First Aid for Poison / Toxic Exposure
Air Sac Rupture:

Air sacs are located inside the neck, chest and belly. When ruptured, air will leak from the sac and accumulate under the bird's skin. If air is not released, the tear in the sac will enlarge. The vet will disinfect skin, poke the air sack with a sterile needle to allow the trapped air to escape. Surgical repair / antibiotic therapy may be necessary.

Anorexia / Loss of Appetite:

If experienced in proper technique, feed with a syringe or a spoon. Contact vet for diagnosis and treatment of whatever condition is causing the loss of appetite or weight loss.

Bite Wounds / Dogs and Cats:

Any bite wounds or scratches from dogs and cats need to be treated aggressively, even if they appear to be minor. The wound needs to be washed out with hydrogen peroxide or Betadine, and the bird will require aggressive antibiotic therapy. Cats transmit a bacterium called Pasteurella, which causes Pasteurella Septicemia in untreated birds. This is a serious infection resulting in death.

Diarrhea:

Remove fresh fruits. Feed cooked white rice, peanut butter, baby pabulum, canned baby foods, Chamomile tea, or a few drops of Pepto Bismol.

Eye Problems / Injury:

Keep bird away from intense light. Flush eye with clean water, use cotton ball or syringe. If there is an object in your bird's eye, float it out with KY Jelly or Ophthalmic ointment.

Emergency Nutrition for Sick Birds / Avoid Dehydration

Oil Contamination of Feathers:

Contamination of oil on the feathers of birds is a serious problem for them as oily feathers are no longer able to insulate the bird from heat and cold, plus the bird will ingest oil in an
effort to clean it off, causing possible toxic reactions. Oily substances like household oil and greasy medications need to be cleaned off the feathers immediately. Dust bird with cornstarch or flour, keeping away from eyes and nose. One suggestion was to fill a fill pillow case with flour, cut hole for head, stick it through, and gently shake it. Then fill sink with 3 or 4 inches of warm water and mild detergent, such as Dawn, which is preferred by wildlife rehabilitators for cleaning victims of oil spills. Work soap in directions of feather growth and rinse (sink spray attachment helpful). Dry and keep warm. Wait until next day to repeat, if necessary. Antibacterial soaps are TOXIC to birds! Do not use on or around birds.

Respiratory Problems / Labored Breathing:

Respiratory disease in birds is serious and is to be considered a life-threatening emergency. The veterinarian needs to assess your bird and decide on treatment, which may include oxygen administration, removal of any foreign body or plaque, and / or the insertion of an air sac tube to facilitate breathing.

Symptoms:

- Open-mouthed abdominal breathing and tail bobbing indicating breathing difficulties; may make clicking noises
- Tail bobbing; may not be able to fly, climb or even perch
- Sneezing or coughing
- Wheezing, there may be loss of voice or a change in the pitch of the song
- Discharge from the nostrils and maybe eyes
- Swelling around the head (caused by infected sinuses); occasionally spreading to the eyes, which may become inflamed
- As death approaches the feet and beak may go blue.

First Aid Measures:

- Occasionally odd objects get stuck up its nostrils (i.e., seeds / millets). Check and, if applicable, remove any objects that may obstruct your bird's airways.
- Minimize stress. With increased stress, the need for oxygen increases. If a bird is having difficulty in breathing, added stress may make the difference between life and death.
- Prompt treatment by an avian vet
- Affected birds should be isolated from the rest of the stock as many respiratory diseases are highly infectious and are spread through the air.
- Provide supportive care, including keeping the bird warm at about 80F or 27 C.
- Lighting should be subdued as this appears to reduce stress; but not turned off, as this would stop your bird from eating and drinking.
- Lower the perches to prevent injury in case the bird falls off.
- Make sure that food and water are within easy reach.
- Clean off any discharge from the nostrils or eyes with moistened cotton wool
- Weigh the bird at regular intervals. If weight loss occurs, of the bird is not seen eating or drinking, provide fluid (Pedialyte works well) - following vet's instructions.
Please note that a number of bird respiratory diseases can be caught by humans, and the most important of these is psittacosis. Should you have sick birds and you get flu like symptoms, it is important that you contact the doctor and tell him that you have a sick bird and that you might have psittacosis.

**Shock:**

Symptoms: fluffed feathers, not moving, rapid shallow breathing, head may be turned with eyes partly closed.

**Treatment:** Place bird in warm (86-90 degrees F), secluded, dimly lit environment. If accompanied by life threatening injuries, contact vet for immediate treatment. Provide emergency / supportive care as needed and as qualified to do.

**Regurgitation / Vomiting**

At times it is difficult to differentiate regurgitation and vomiting. Both involve bringing up food and expelling it from the mouth. Regurgitation is a normal part of breeding / mating / bonding behavior. A bird that is regurgitating or vomiting will make a head-bobbing type of movement. Food will be brought up and deposited on the bird's toys or mate.

Bacterial, viral and fungal infections, obstructions, toxins or liver or kidney problems may also cause regurgitation or vomiting. If you suspect that this behavior is the result of illness, a veterinarian should examine your bird.

- Some breeders are successfully treating vomiting with a few drops of Pepto Bismol. This should be discussed with your vet.

**Provide Supportive Care**

**First Aid for Poison / Toxin Exposure:**

**Inhalation:** If the toxin is inhaled, such as fumes from a Teflon pan, remove the bird to a well-ventilated area. Steam may help reduce upper airway irritation and to help breathing. To this end, place the bird into a bathroom with shower (hot water) running.

Your vet may choose the following therapies:

- Humidify oxygen therapy. Provide diuretics for pulmonary edema. Bronchodilators may be helpful. Give anti-inflammatory drugs* and broad-spectrum antibiotics. Provide thermal regulation and nutritional
Eye Exposures:

- Gently flush eyes with tepid tap water, artificial tears, or saline for 20-30 minutes.
- Use eyedropper to flush in small birds.
- Perform fluorescein staining and followup exams in cases of exposures to corrosive agents or if redness, pain or ocular (eye) discharge occurs.

External Contact with Poison:

- Stabilize bird first!
- Do not remove toxicants from feathers if bird is seriously ill.
- With light dermal exposures, wash gently with solution of mild liquid dish washing detergent (e.g., Dawn) and warm water, rub gently, then rinse with plain warm water to remove soap. Repeat if needed.
- With heavy dermal exposures, a thorough bath may be indicated. Pat dry, keep warm and monitor for signs of hypothermia.
- Because detergent may seep between the feather barbs, multiple rinses may be required.
- An E-collar may be necessary to prevent ingestion of toxins.

Ingestion of Toxin (i.e., plant, household cleaner):

- If by acid, alkalis, or petroleum product: make it swallow milk, mixed with Pepto Bismol, egg white, or olive oil. DO NOT MAKE BIRD VOMIT!
- If other toxins are involved, induce vomiting. Use mustard and water solution put at the back of the throat.
- 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 the bird, how much was consumed, when the exposure occurred, and any symptoms the bird currently is showing.
- Sanggay Dhorje - a bird owner in Malaysia who doesn't have access to avian vets (but fortunately has a lot of knowledge of holistic remedies) saved his African Grey who ingested some of his dish soap. He described the procedures he followed: "I quickly used my fingers to remove the liquid from her tongue. I could feel the liquid and when I smelt my fingers, the dish cleaner smell was quite strong. I removed the liquid thrice using my fingers until my wife told me to use a wet cloth to clean her tongue. Since we do not have an avian vet in my area, all I could do was to give her liquid oxygen drops which has been proven to remove heavy metals in human body. I squeezed a few drops into a cup of spring water and fed her as much as she could drink. Then I gave her a little bit of vitamin c powder to detox her body. Lastly, I added pinch of wheat grass and spirulina powder to a tablespoon of water and had her to drink them. I had to use my knowledge and experience in human nutrition to detox Koko. That's all I could do for my baby. My wife got up at 1am and once at 5am to check on her. Thanks goodness she was alright. When I took her out from the cage at 7am, the newspaper was soaking wet with her urine. Usually it was
dry. She doesn't poo in the night. I guess the detoxification works. She is actively flying and chattering now." (Latest update: Koko is still doing fine!)

- Veterinary care may include:

**Crop lavage, with or without activated charcoal**

**Administer bulking cathartics**

- **Emesis**
  - Do not induce emesis in a bird. Emesis is considered unsafe in birds due to the potential for aspiration and the ineffectiveness of emetic medications in birds.

**Crop Lavage**

- Consider crop lavage for early decontamination.
- Sedate frightened or fractious birds.
- Use isoflurane gas and endotracheal tube to prevent aspiration.
  - Contraindications to crop lavage are ingestion of corrosive substances or petroleum distillates.
- For lavage, gently flush the crop with warm saline and aspirate repeatedly (3-4 times).

**Activated Charcoal**

- As an effective adsorbent for toxins, give activated charcoal with a galvage tube.
- Dosage of activated charcoal is 1-3 g/kg (or 1-3 mg/g body weight)
- Activated charcoal is not very effective in absorbing petroleum distillates, corrosive agents and most heavy metals.

**Cathartics**

- Increases elimination of activated charcoal-bound toxins.
- Use cautiously in birds.
- Do not use in dehydrated birds.

**Bulking Cathartics**

- Bulking agents can be useful in removing small solid objects, such as lead paint chips, from the bird's GI tract.
- One-half teaspoon psyllium (Metamucil®) mixed with 60 ml baby food gruel is administered with a dosing syringe or eyedropper. Repeat to ensure complete removal of the objects 1-2 times daily.
- A less effective bulking agent is dilute peanut butter. (Ref: Clinician Notebook)

**Post First Aid Care:** Place bird in a hospital cage, keep warm and contact your avian veterinarian or Animal Poison Control Center immediately for further advice. More
Toxins

Examples of Noxious Inhalants

- Some nonstick surfaces (irons and ironing board covers, pots and pans, woks, drip pans)
- Gasoline fumes
- Smoke (any source)
- Automobile exhaust/carbon monoxide
- Self-cleaning ovens
- Insecticide sprays and foggers
- Chemical sprays (e.g., disinfectants, deodorizers, furniture polish)
- Glues, paints, nail polish, Ammonia or bleach
- Mothballs
- Burning foods and cooking oils
- Fumigants (sulfuryl fluoride, aluminum phosphide)
- Aerosols

Common Toxic Foods and Plants

Cause of Action:

Inhalant Exposure

- Remove bird from source and supply fresh air immediately!

Your vet may choose the following therapies:

- Humidify oxygen therapy. Provide diuretics for pulmonary edema. Bronchodilators may be helpful. Give anti-inflammatory drugs* and broad-spectrum antibiotics. Provide thermal regulation and nutritional support. Hydration therapy may be necessary

Ocular (Eye) Exposure

- Gently flush eyes with tepid tap water or saline for 20-30 minutes.
- Use eyedropper to flush in small birds.
- Perform fluorescein staining and followup exams in cases of exposures to corrosive agents or if redness, pain or ocular (eye) discharge occurs

Dermal Exposure:

- Stabilize bird first!
• Do not remove toxins from feathers if bird is seriously ill.
• With light dermal exposures, wash gently with solution of mild liquid dish washing detergent (e.g., Dawn) and warm water, rub gently, then rinse with plain warm water to remove soap. Repeat if needed.
• With heavy dermal exposures, a thorough bath may be indicated. Pat dry, keep warm and monitor for signs of hypothermia.
• Because detergent may seep between the feather barbs, multiple rinses may be required
• An E-collar may be necessary to prevent ingestion of toxins.

Ref: Clinician Notebook

Heavy Metal Toxicity

NEED A VET?
USA: Find Your Local Avian Veterinarian

Information contained on this website is provided as general reference only. For application to specific circumstances, professional advice should be sought.

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