Artificial Respiration and CPR

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If your cat becomes unconscious, respiratory arrest may occur, and usually occurs before cardiac arrest. The heart may continue to beat for several minutes after the breathing stops. Artificial respiration, or rescue breathing, must begin immediately to save your cat's life. If the heart stops, chest compressions must be given right away to keep the blood pumping. Artificial respiration and chest compressions given together are called cardiopulmonary resuscitation, or CPR.

Artificial Respiration

If your cat has gone into respiratory arrest, begin artificial respiration immediately.

1. Lay your cat on his side on a flat surface.
2. Be sure your cat has stopped breathing: watch for the rise and fall of the chest, feel for breath on your hand, look at the gums - they will turn blue from lack of oxygen.
3. Check the airway - it must be clear. Extend the head and neck. Open the mouth and look for a foreign object. If an object is blocking the airway, grab the tongue and pull it outward. If this does not dislodge the object, use your fingers, pliers, or tongs to grasp it. Be careful not to push the object farther down the airway. If the object cannot be reached or pulled out, use the Heimlich maneuver. Do not mistake the small bones in the throat for a foreign object.
4. Once the airway is clear, begin rescue breathing.
5. With your cat on his side, lift the chin to straighten out his throat.
6. Use one hand to grasp the muzzle and hold the mouth shut.
7. Put your mouth completely over the nose and blow gently; the chest should expand. Blow gently - just enough to move his chest.
8. Wait for the air to leave the lungs before breathing again.
9. Continue this, giving 20 breaths per minute (one breath every three seconds), until your cat breathes on his own or as long as the heart beats.
10. Continue to monitor the heartbeat.

CPR

If your cat's heart has stopped beating, CPR must begin immediately. It is best to have two people performing CPR - one continuing artificial respiration while the other does chest compressions. Follow the instructions for artificial respiration, alternating with chest compressions. For two people performing CPR, alternate one breath with three compressions. For one person performing CPR, alternate one breath with five compressions.

1. Lay your cat on her side on a flat surface.
2. Place the palm of your hand on the rib cage over the heart. Place your other hand on top of the first. (For puppies and kittens, put your thumb on one side of the chest and the rest of your fingers on the other side.)
3. Compress the chest about one inch. Squeeze and release rhythmically at a rate of 80 to 100 compressions per minute.

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