The collapse checklist

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WHAT CAUSES COLLAPSE?

Weakness / collapse can be caused by many processes, including one (or more) of:



- Structural heart disease
- Irregular heart rhythms



- Respiratory / airway disease
- Neurological disease
- Blood loss (haemorrhage)



- Metabolic disorders (e.g. low blood glucose, hormone disturbance, high blood pressure)

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY PET COLLAPSES?

Witnessing a pet collapse can be scary, but if you can, try to:

- Check to see if they are breathing*
- See if you can feel a heartbeat*
- Move away anything they could hit their head on if they try to move
- Only move them if they are at risk of further injury
- Stay with them, but allow them space
- Avoid putting your hands in / around their mouth - pets can bite if distressed or disorientated

(**Seek urgent veterinary help if not*)

WHAT CAN BE HELPFUL TO YOUR VET

If your pet has collapsed, seek veterinary advice as soon as you can,
even if they seem like they are back to normal.

To narrow down the cause, it is helpful to note:

- How many episodes, how far apart
- What your pet was doing just before the episode (i.e. resting, exercising, coughing, getting excited)
- How long the episode lasted
- Whether your pet went rigid or floppy during the episode
- Whether your pet passed urine or faeces during the episode
- If your pet was aware of your presence or their surroundings
- If there was any change in your pet's gum or tongue colour
- Whether there was any change in your pet's breathing (rate, effort)
- If your pet's behaviour was normal immediately after the episode

If it is safe to do so and doesn't delay veterinary attention, **record a video** of the episode(s) and **keep a diary** of when and what happens.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

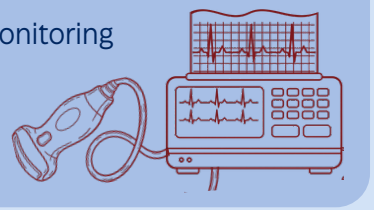
If your pet remains collapsed on arrival to the practice, your vet will aim to stabilise them first, before discussing further investigations.

Based on your description and their clinical findings, your vet may suggest certain tests to help plan further monitoring or treatment options.

It may be appropriate to **rule out a cardiac cause** for collapse (even where there may not be obvious heart abnormalities). This also helps your vet to **assess the safety of your pet for sedation / anaesthesia** for other tests, if indicated.

Initial recommendations for **investigating the heart** may include:

- Blood tests
- Echocardiography (ultrasound of the heart)
- ECG (assessing heart rate and rhythm) or Holter monitor (ECG recording monitor fitted in a vest which your pet wears at home)
- Chest xrays
- Blood pressure monitoring



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