

# 10 Popular Home Remedies for Dogs

## What May Help, What Can Harm, and When to Call the Vet

If you spend any time around dog lovers, dog parks, or online pet groups, you have surely heard a thousand different pieces of advice on how to fix whatever ails your pup. Some of those old-time home remedies have been passed around the whelping box and the show ring for generations, while others spread across social media like wildfire.

While a couple of gentle comfort measures can be helpful for a mild, passing issue, plenty of popular internet remedies can turn a small trouble into a veterinary emergency.

**The golden safety rule:** A home measure is only ever appropriate for a mild, short-lived problem in an adult dog who is alert, drinking water, keeping food down, and acting like themselves. It is not suitable for young puppies, nursing mothers, frail seniors, or dogs showing signs of real distress.

## When to Skip the Home Remedies and Call the Vet Immediately

If your dog shows any of the following warning signs, do not wait around to see if a home trick works. Call your clinic or an emergency veterinary hospital right away:

- Repeated vomiting or inability to keep water down
- Bloody, black, or tarry stool, or severe, watery diarrhea
- Extreme lethargy, weakness, collapse, fever, or pale gums
- Trouble breathing, swelling around the face or muzzle, tremors, or seizures
- A swollen, tight, or painful abdomen
- Straining to urinate or defecate with little to no success
- Deep wounds, punctures, animal bites, active bleeding, or bad-smelling skin discharge
- Violent head shaking, a head tilt, or ears that smell foul or look angry and red
- Any suspicion that your dog swallowed something toxic or poisonous

**Emergency poison contacts:** If you suspect your dog has eaten something dangerous, contact your veterinarian immediately, or call the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: (888) 426-4435** or the **Pet Poison Helpline: (855) 764-7661**. Both services operate 24 hours a day, 365 days a year; a consultation fee may apply.

## Remedies That May Offer Limited Support in the Right Situation

### 1. Plain Canned Pumpkin

**Why people try it:** It is widely used to firm up loose stool or help ease minor constipation.

**What the science says:** Pure pumpkin contains water and soluble fiber. Soluble fiber can absorb excess moisture in the bowel and may add structure to loose stool; it may also help a mildly constipated dog pass stool.

**Anecdotal experience:** Many seasoned breeders and handlers keep pure pumpkin in the pantry. When an otherwise well dog develops loose stool after travel, a dog show weekend, or a food change, a small amount mixed into a meal is commonly reported to help stool firm up by the following day.

**The catch:** Pumpkin is not medicine and will not cure parasites, giardia, or viral illness. Use 100 percent pure pumpkin purée, never pumpkin pie filling, which may contain sugar, spices, or sweeteners.

## 2. Short-Term Bland Diet: Boiled Chicken and White Rice

**Why people try it:** It is a familiar choice after a minor bout of vomiting or diarrhea.

**What the science says:** Lean, skinless boiled chicken with plain boiled white rice provides low-fat protein and simple carbohydrates that may be easier for an irritated gastrointestinal tract to tolerate.

**Anecdotal experience:** Owners often report that after a dog gets into rich table scraps or eats grass, small, frequent portions of a bland meal for 24 to 48 hours can help an otherwise bright, hydrated dog settle back into normal digestion.

**The catch:** This is temporary only and is not nutritionally complete. If signs continue beyond a day or two, your dog refuses food or water, or new warning signs appear, contact your veterinarian.

## 3. Dog-Formulated Probiotics

**Why people try it:** To support normal digestion after stress, loose stool, or a prescribed course of antibiotics.

**What the science says:** Some canine-specific probiotic products may support normal intestinal microflora and stool consistency. Results differ by dog and product.

**Anecdotal experience:** Breeders commonly report softer stool during stressful transitions, such as a puppy moving to a new home. A trusted canine probiotic is often used as supportive care and is sometimes associated with firmer stool over several days.

**The catch:** A probiotic cannot diagnose or treat the cause of ongoing gastrointestinal signs. Human yogurt and probiotics may not be suitable for dogs, including because some dogs do not tolerate lactose well.

## 4. Colloidal Oatmeal Baths

**Why people try it:** To soothe mildly dry, itchy, or seasonally irritated skin.

**What the science says:** Colloidal oatmeal can help moisturize and temporarily soothe the skin barrier.

**Anecdotal experience:** During pollen season or dry winter weather, owners often find that a lukewarm oatmeal bath gives a dog with mild, superficial itchiness a short period of noticeable comfort.

**The catch:** Oatmeal will not cure fleas, mites, hot spots, or bacterial or yeast infections. For dense double coats, including Shiba Inu coats, rinse thoroughly and dry all the way to the skin so trapped moisture does not create another skin problem.

## Remedies That Need Careful Handling and Should Not Be Oversold

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### 5. Epsom Salt Paw Soaks

**Why people try it:** To clean dirty paws or offer temporary comfort for minor pad irritation.

**What the science says:** A warm soak may help loosen surface dirt and provide temporary comfort. It does not treat a deeper paw injury or infection.

**Anecdotal experience:** When a dog has picked up grit between the pads on a walk or has minor surface irritation, owners sometimes find a brief, supervised warm soak helpful before carefully inspecting and drying the foot.

**The catch:** It cannot mend a broken toe, cure an infected nail bed, or remove a deeply embedded object. Do not let the dog drink the soak water, as ingested magnesium sulfate can cause diarrhea.

### 6. Coconut Oil

**Why people try it:** It is promoted for dry skin, shiny coats, digestion, and hot spots.

**What the science says:** A very small amount on dry, intact callused skin can act as a moisturizer. Its broader health claims are not established.

**Anecdotal experience:** Owners often report that dogs promptly lick applied coconut oil away. Feeding it for coat shine is also commonly followed by greasy or loose stool in sensitive dogs.

**The catch:** It adds fat and calories and may not suit dogs prone to digestive upset. Do not apply it to open, weeping, infected, or yeast-affected skin.

## Popular Remedies That Are Best Avoided

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### 7. Apple Cider Vinegar

**Why people try it:** It is promoted online for fleas, itchy skin, ear yeast, and digestion.

**What the science says:** There is not credible evidence that apple cider vinegar kills fleas or cures canine ear and skin infections. Its acidity can irritate damaged tissue.

**Anecdotal experience:** Veterinary and grooming communities frequently caution about owners applying diluted vinegar to already red, itchy ears. Dogs may react with obvious discomfort and head shaking while the underlying ear disease remains untreated.

**The catch:** Keep it out of eyes, ear canals, and open wounds. Seek veterinary care for ear pain, odor, discharge, or persistent itching.

## 8. Essential Oils

**Why people try it:** They appear in home diffusers, flea sprays, and calming or skin-care mixtures, including tea tree, eucalyptus, lavender, and peppermint oils.

**What the science says:** Concentrated essential oils can cause harm through skin exposure, ingestion, and inhalation. Dogs may be especially sensitive to certain compounds; tea tree oil is a particular concern.

**Anecdotal experience:** Emergency veterinary accounts commonly describe dogs becoming drooly, unsteady, lethargic, or ill after homemade essential-oil products are put on their coat or used heavily in an enclosed room.

**The catch:** Natural does not automatically mean safe. Do not apply concentrated oils to your dog or use them as flea treatment without direct veterinary guidance.

## 9. Garlic and Onion Mixtures

**Why people try it:** Some people believe these foods repel fleas and ticks or support immunity.

**What the science says:** Garlic, onions, chives, shallots, and leeks are members of the *Allium* family. They can damage canine red blood cells and cause hemolytic anemia.

**Anecdotal experience:** Veterinary staff warn of cases in which dogs receiving garlic as a repeated supplement later show fatigue, pale gums, and reduced exercise tolerance, with bloodwork indicating anemia.

**The catch:** Do not use garlic or onion as a flea deterrent. Keep raw, cooked, powdered, and dehydrated forms out of your dog's food.

## 10. Hydrogen Peroxide

**Why people try it:** It is sometimes used to clean a cut or to induce vomiting after a suspected poisoning.

**What the science says:** On a wound, hydrogen peroxide can damage healthy healing tissue. When given orally, it can irritate the stomach and may cause serious complications, including aspiration if vomit enters the lungs.

**Anecdotal experience:** Owners who repeatedly use peroxide on a scrape may find that it becomes more irritated and slow to heal. Emergency veterinarians also see complications when vomiting is induced at home without first identifying what was swallowed.

**The catch:** Do not use peroxide on wounds. For a minor scrape, use plain warm water or sterile saline and seek veterinary guidance as needed. Never give peroxide to induce vomiting unless a licensed veterinarian or poison expert has instructed you to do so for that specific exposure. Call the **ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center: (888) 426-4435** or **Pet Poison Helpline: (855) 764-7661**.

## A Note of Encouragement from One Dog Lover to Another

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It is natural to want to reach into the cupboard and bring quick comfort when our dogs feel poorly. The kindest course is knowing when a simple, low-risk comfort measure is reasonable and when

veterinary care is needed. When in doubt, keep your dog quiet, clean, and hydrated, and call your veterinarian.

## References and Further Reading

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- [American Kennel Club: Can Pumpkin Help With Dog Diarrhea?](#)
- [American Kennel Club: Home Remedies for Your Dog](#)
- [Chewy: Apple Cider Vinegar for Dogs: Is It Safe?](#)
- [Merck Veterinary Manual: Garlic and Onion \(\*Allium\* spp.\) Toxicosis in Animals](#)
- [Preventive Vet: Peroxide Is Not for Cleaning Pet Wounds](#)
- [VCA Animal Hospitals: Wound Care: Dos and Don'ts](#)