

My Dog Swallowed Something: The Decision Card

The single most outcome-changing fact in swallowed-object medicine is that options shrink with the clock. This card is for the twenty minutes after you notice, when what you do next genuinely changes how the story ends.

Call your vet at INGESTION, not at symptoms. Early on - often the first couple of hours - many objects still sit in the stomach, where vet-directed vomiting or a scope can end the story for the cost of an appointment. Past the stomach, the same object becomes a wait-watch-or-surgery decision. Have ready: the object's twin if you have one, your dog's weight, and the timeline.

The object table - pass or problem, honestly

THE OBJECT	THE HONEST ODDS	THE MOVE
Sock, underwear, fabric	Sometimes passes (big dog, small sock), obstructs often - fabric bunches at the stomach exit	Call at ingestion. Waiting shrinks the options
Corn cob	Notorious non-passer - the perfect obstruction size, indigestible, the classic summer surgery	Call now, every time; do not wait for symptoms
String, ribbon, thread, tinsel	The linear foreign body - the gut bunches along it and the string saws	EMERGENCY. Never pull, cut or handle a visible end. Clinic now
Cooked bones, sharp things	Puncture risk in both directions	Call. Vomiting is NOT induced on sharps
Batteries, magnets (2+), coins	Chemical burns / gut-pinching / zinc toxicity	Emergency outright, symptoms or none
Rocks, toy chunks, squeakers	Size-dependent - small chunks often pass; big chunks and whole squeakers obstruct	Call with sizes (object vs dog); the vet runs the math
Rawhide or chew swallowed whole	Choking risk first, then obstruction candidate	Airway distress = emergency; swallowed clean = the call and the watch

The never-list that protects the options: no home vomiting induction without explicit vet direction (wrong for sharps, wrong for some objects, and easy to do wrong) · no bread-to-cushion-it folklore · no fishing anything from the throat you cannot fully see and grip · and the rule worth tattooing: **never pull string from either end.** Stop your dog chewing at it if you safely can, and go.

If your vet okayed watching - the four channels, 24 to 72 hours

Appetite
Often the first thing obstruction takes - though a normal appetite does not rule it out

Vomiting
Especially repeated, or eating-then-vomiting: the classic partial-obstruction rhythm

Demeanor
A dulling, hunching or belly-guarding dog has changed categories

Stool
Glove-and-check duty. Straining, or no stool past normal, extends the watch

Feed exactly as your vet directed - do not add bulky or unusual food on your own. **Go now, mid-watch, for:** repeated vomiting, appetite gone, a painful or bloating belly, black or bloody stool, pale gums, weakness, collapse, or a dog who simply dulls. Everything moves sooner for puppies, seniors and tiny breeds. And know that seventy-two symptom-free hours are reassuring, not proof - the object confirmed out is the strongest all-clear there is, and signs that continue even after a sighting still need the vet, because fragments and second objects happen.