

Preventing Collar Accidents

There's no disputing that collars and leashes are vital, essential equipment for dogs and their owners. What some people don't know is that these very items that help keep dogs safe can also be deadly in certain situations. Collar accidents are the most frequent cause of strangulation in dogs, and they often take place at home, in the backyard, even under supervision—and can happen with many types of collars. Typically, a dog's collar or ID tags get caught on a fence, branch, gate, heating vent, or on the wire of a kennel or crate, and in the ensuing panic and struggle to free herself, the dog strangles.

Another scenario is when two or more dogs are playing and one dog's jaw gets caught on the other's collar. This tends to happen at dog parks when dogs are left to run and wrestle while wearing chain or

prong collars. Even with immediate human intervention, the tension is often too tight to remove the collar or separate the dogs in time.

Sometimes collar accidents are caused by the unsafe use of leashes or tie-outs. Imagine that a dog is tied up on a raised deck, balcony, or in the back of an open vehicle and either falls accidentally or decides to run after a squirrel or another dog. If the leash or tie-out isn't long enough to reach the ground or gets caught on something, the dog literally hangs herself. If a dog is tethered to a pole and circles it enough times to get tangled, she can strangle herself in the struggle to break free.

Whenever possible, remove collars while dogs play to avoid a wayward jaw getting caught during a rambunctious wrestling match.



Protect your dog from collar and leash accidents by following these tips:

- Remove collars whenever possible while dogs play together (*do not do this in any area that's not safely enclosed and free from road traffic*).
- Use a quick-release snap buckle collar or a "break-away" collar designed to snap free if snagged or caught on an object. Avoid traditional belt buckle-style collars, which are difficult to remove quickly in an emergency.
- Avoid chain collars or prong collars. If you must use one to walk your dog, remove it whenever she is off leash.
- Avoid dangling ID tags whenever possible. Look for collars that let you *handwrite or engrave your contact information directly on the collar*, or one with a riveted nameplate that attaches to the

collar's flat surface. If there are tags the dog must wear, attaching them to a breakaway collar offers protection against dangerous snags.

- Never tie your dog up on a raised surface or in the back of an open vehicle. If you must tie her up somewhere on ground level, be sure it is free of obstacles and cannot be "circled around" to avoid entanglement.
- Check your dog's collar regularly to ensure proper fit: You should be able to just slip two or three fingers between the collar and your dog's neck. If a collar is too loose, the dog's jaw or leg can become stuck in it. If it is too tight it can restrict breathing or cause damage to the trachea, especially in puppies and toy breeds.

