



What To Do If You Find An Injured, Freshwater Turtle

**Not sure if it's a turtle or tortoise? [Click here](#)*

- **Put the turtle in a box** that is large and strong enough the turtle can't escape it. You can put towels, newspaper, or paper towels in the bottom of the box to make him more comfortable.
- **Keep the turtle dry.** Unlike fish, aquatic turtles don't have to be in water to survive. They can safely be kept dry for several hours (or even longer) if needed. Putting a turtle in water spreads germs and bacteria into the wounded area, and also prevents blood from clotting. If the injury is severe enough it could also cause drowning. Placing the turtle in or on wet towels or blankets only serves to make the turtle cold.
- **Keep the turtle INDOORS**, and keep him protected from flies or gnats. These bugs will be attracted to the smell of blood, will land on the injuries, and will lay their eggs there. These eggs hatch into maggots, which can do serious damage to the turtle.

- **If the turtle is bleeding heavily**, you can use some sterile gauze to help stem the flow. You can also wrap the turtle with sterile gauze to help stabilize any broken shell pieces that may be present. Neosporin/triple antibiotic ointment can be placed on *minor* open wounds to help kill bacteria, and to help prevent any gauze from sticking to the wounds.
 - **DO NOT** use any ointment, cream or salve on deep wounds (for example, on shell breaks where you can see the membranes, tissues, or organs underneath.)
 - Never put any ointment, cream, or salve where it could get into the turtle's eyes, nose, or mouth.
- **DO NOT** offer an injured turtle food. Many aquatic turtle species cannot eat outside of water (and remember, we said NO water.) Unlike humans, turtles don't eat three meals a day. It will not harm the turtle to go several days without food. Turtles generally don't want to eat when they've been injured anyway.
- **Keep the turtle warm** and away from any drafts. A turtle's immune system is completely dependent on its body temperature, which unlike humans, they cannot maintain themselves. Their bodies are whatever temperature their environment is. If he's too cold, the healing process cannot begin. An ideal temperature range is 75-80 F. Many people accomplish these temps by placing the turtle in a closet or bathroom, where air conditioning generally doesn't circulate. If that isn't possible, placing the turtle near a table or desk lamp can provide extra warmth (just make sure the turtle doesn't overheat.)
- **Leave the turtle in silence.** A warm, dark area where there is little to no activity, and away from pets is best. Only check on the turtle occasionally, and try to be quiet when doing so. Stress can inhibit immune response in turtles, so the more at-ease you can make him, the faster he'll heal. As strange as it may sound, a closet is often a great place to put an injured turtle temporarily until you can get help for him. It's dark, closed off and quieter than the rest of the house, and is often warmer and less drafty than the rest of the house.
- **If/when you transport the turtle**, you can do so in the box you've already placed him in. Just make sure the box isn't so large that he'll slide around in it during transport. Try to be gentle with your driving, especially if the shell has been broken, to avoid any further damage to the shell. Do not place the turtle in the trunk or open bed of a pickup. He will quickly overheat this way, even on cooler days if the sun is out.

Most importantly, if you have stopped to help a turtle, ***THANK YOU!***

You are turtle heroes!