

# ANIMAL BITES

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## BASIC INFORMATION

### DESCRIPTION

Bite wounds to humans from dogs, cats, or other animals, including humans.

### FREQUENT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- Bite wounds can be tears, punctures, scratches, ripping, or crush injuries.
- Dog bites usually involve the hands, face, or the lower extremities.
- Cat bites usually involve the hands, followed by lower extremities, face and trunk.

### CAUSES

- Most bite wounds are from a domestic pet known to the victim. Large dogs are the most common source.
- Human bites are often the result of one person striking another in the mouth with a clenched fist.

### RISK INCREASES WITH

Exposure to domestic pets or wild animals. Dog bites rarely become infected. Cat bites and human bites frequently become infected.

### PREVENTIVE MEASURES

- Education on how to avoid animal bites for children as well as adults.
- Avoid stray animals.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Wounds should steadily improve and close over by 7-10 days.

### POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Complications from bites can include infection, extensive soft tissue injuries with scarring, hemorrhage, rabies, and sometimes death.



## TREATMENT

### GENERAL MEASURES

- Wound cleaning.
- Surgical closure if needed.
- Wound usually will be left open to heal to lessen risk of infection.
- Splint hand if it is injured.
- Human bite wounds on the hands should not be closed primarily due to the high risk of infection.
- Elevation of the injured extremity to prevent swelling.
- Contact the local health department and ask about the prevalence of rabies in the species of animal involved.
- If possible the animal that caused the bite should be held and checked for rabies.

### MEDICATIONS

- Preventive antibiotic treatment may be prescribed.
- Antitetanus injection may have to be given.
- Sometimes, an antirabies vaccine or serum may have to be given.

### ACTIVITY

No restrictions, except those caused by the injury.

### DIET

No special diet.



## NOTIFY OUR OFFICE IF

- You or a family member suffers from an animal bite.
- The bite does not begin to heal within 2-3 days.
- New or unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.