



ANIMAL BITES



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 crushing injuries.
- Dog bites usually involve the hands, face, or the legs and feet.
- Cat bites usually involve the hands, followed by legs, feet, 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.

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 in 7 to 10 days.
- Dog bites rarely become infected. Cat bites and human bites frequently become infected.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Infection, extensive soft tissue injuries with scarring, hemorrhage, rabies, and sometimes death.



DIAGNOSIS & TREATMENT

GENERAL MEASURES

- Elevate the injured extremity to prevent swelling.
- If the wound is bleeding, apply pressure to the area with a clean towel or cloth until bleeding stops. Clean wound with soap and water, then dry the area and cover it with sterile gauze or clean cloth.

- Do not apply antiseptic or other medicine.
- Call your health care provider, or take the patient to an emergency department if the wound is severe, it won't stop bleeding, or the bite was from a wild animal or one behaving strangely.
- Contact the local health department and consult with them about the prevalence of rabies in the species of animal involved.
- If possible, the animal that caused the bite should be checked for rabies. Call an animal control office for instructions.

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 in 2 to 3 days.
- New or unexplained symptoms develop. Drugs used in treatment may produce side effects.