

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.

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 may include infection, scarring, hemorrhage and rabies.

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.
 - ↳ Unless your doctor tells you differently, always finish the full course of your antibiotic and steroid prescriptions, even if you start to feel better.
 - ↳ Antibiotics and steroids may interfere with the effectiveness of birth control pills. Use an alternative method of contraception for the remainder of the month after finishing your antibiotic or steroid prescription.
- Anti-tetanus injection may have to be given.
- Sometimes, an antirabies vaccine or serum may have to be given.

SEEK MEDICAL ATTENTION IF:

- 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.