

# Animal Bites and Scratches

If you or your child is bitten or scratched by an animal, the wound can get infected. Clean the wound right away and **get medical help as soon as possible**. Even if the animal is your family pet, you should follow these steps:

1. Wash the wound well with soap and water.
2. Put pressure on the area to stop the bleeding.
3. When bleeding stops, put an antibiotic cream, such as Neosporin, on the wound.
4. Cover the bite or scratch with a clean bandage.
5. Get medical help the same day if possible.
  - Many bites are puncture wounds that can become infected if not cleaned well.
  - If any stitches are needed, they must be done within the first 12 hours after a bite.

Human bites should receive the same first aid and prompt medical attention as an animal bite.

Your child will be given a tetanus vaccine if he or she has not had one in the past 5 years. An adult needs the vaccine every 10 years.

Follow the treatment your doctor orders. Each day, until the wound heals, remove the bandage and check the wound. Clean the wound with soap and water and put on a clean bandage until the wound heals.

Your doctor will report the bite to your local health department. This should be done within 24 hours of the bite.

## Call your doctor if:

- The wound is red, swollen, warm to the touch, or more painful.
- There is more drainage or a bad odor from the wound.
- There is a fever over 101 degrees F or 38 degrees C by mouth.

## What to do about the animal:

- Call your doctor **right away** if you do not know the owner of the animal that bit you or your child. The animal may have rabies.
- If the animal was tame, try to find its owner. Find out if the animal has had shots for rabies, and the date the shots were done. The doctor will need to know this to plan treatment.
- When possible, put the animal in a fenced area away from people and other animals for 10 days. Watch for any changes in behavior. **Do not try to cage a vicious or wild animal.** Call the police or animal control department.
- If you or your child has been bitten by a bat or has slept in a room with one, **you must see a doctor.**

## Safety around animals

Teach your child to be safe around animals.

- Never bother an animal when it is eating.
- Do not pull on your pet's ears or tail.
- Pick up your pets slowly.
- Wash your hands after petting an animal.
- Do not feed wild animals or animals you do not know.
- Young children should not put their hands in an animal's tank or cage.
- Keep pets on a leash.

### If a dog is threatening:

- **Never scream and run.**
- **Stand very still** with hands at your sides. **Avoid eye contact** with the dog. When the dog loses interest in you, slowly back away until he is out of sight.
- If the dog does attack, place your jacket, book bag, or anything you can between you and the dog.
- If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball with your hands over your ears and do not move. Try not to scream or roll around.
- Always **walk away** if a dog is growling or begins to growl when approached. **Never run!**