

CAT AND DOG BITES

Introduction

A bite from a healthy cat or dog can lead to a serious infection as the mouths of all animals harbour bacteria, which can cause infection. This is why it is important to go to your doctor if you are bitten by a cat or a dog.

If you are bitten by a cat or a dog

Bites can be deep or superficial and sometimes there is considerable tearing of the skin. The initial reaction to a dog or cat bite is pain, bleeding and some swelling. You should try to flush the wound with clean water and then ***immediately*** seek medical advice. An anti-tetanus injection or antibiotics may be needed.

Some bites can be very deep and penetrating with little tearing of the skin – a puncture wound. These bites are difficult to clean and you must seek medical attention as soon as possible because the risk of getting an infection is high. If there is a lot of skin damage or you have been bitten around the face or neck, then you will also need to seek medical assistance

Prevention of Dog Bites

There are a few simple guidelines to remember when approaching a dog; remember that not all dogs are friendly to strangers.

- Don't tease or try to hurt dogs. If you hurt or annoy a dog, it can't tell you to stop and so it might growl or bare its teeth. You can avoid this by making sure you always treat dogs in the same way that you would like to be treated.
- If you want to approach a dog, always ask the owner first.
- Dogs don't like being stared at – they can find it threatening.

- Don't disturb a dog when it's sleeping or eating.
- Do not try to pat a dog from behind as you may startle it. When you first approach a dog, introduce yourself by holding your hand out in front of you, keeping your fingers closed and let the dog sniff it.
- Don't try to pull away if a dog grabs your clothing with its teeth.
- When two dogs are playing or fighting, don't get involved. Leave it to their owners to part them.
- Don't run away from a dog, even if you are afraid of it. A dog likes to chase things and if you run away from it, the dog will think you want to play. The best thing to do is to stand still and try to ignore it. The dog will then lose interest in you and leave you alone.

Conclusion

If you seek immediate medical attention infection is unlikely and severe consequences are very rare. By following simple guidelines when approaching dogs, bites can be prevented.

Pets are Good for People

Pets provide us with loyalty, companionship, love and affection, as well as the many physical and psychological benefits. The least we can do to repay this is to ensure that we keep them in the best of health. A healthy pet is a happy pet and a happy pet can help us enjoy a much fuller and more rewarding life.

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For further information, please contact the Pet Health Council on:

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