

Animal Bites



Overview

A bite from an animal can be very dangerous. Besides obvious injuries like tissue punctures and tears, bites can also introduce germs. Whether from a wild animal or from a pet, an animal bite - even one that seems minor - can cause a serious infection.

Types of Bites

Most animal bites are caused by dogs. Dogs' teeth can tear and crush skin and soft tissues. These bites can cause nerve damage, and gaping wounds that need stitches. Cats account for fewer bites, and they don't tend to cause the same kinds of tearing and crushing. But their long, sharp teeth can puncture and push germs deep below your skin. And the bacteria in cats' mouths is aggressive. It can cause a serious infection within hours. A bite on a finger joint, for example, can cause you to lose a finger.



Signs of Infection

If you have an infection, you may have swelling and red skin around the bite. The wound may be painful, and the pain may get worse as the infection progresses. Eventually you may have other symptoms, such as a fever, chills, vomiting and other issues. Without proper treatment, you can have serious complications.

Treatment

Treatment for an animal bite may include antibiotics. You may need stitches or reconstructive surgery. You may need a tetanus booster or rabies treatment if the animal wasn't vaccinated. Your healthcare provider can create a plan that is right for you.

