

ANIMAL BITES

Animal bites are common worldwide and may be associated with significant morbidity. Dog bites make up approx 90% of animal bites; most dog bite victims are children. Cat bites make up approx 10% of animal bites; most cat bite victims are adult women. Infection is more common after cat bites than dog bites.

Factors that increase the risk of infection following an animal bite include:

- Underlying immunosuppression (including diabetes)
- Bite involving the hand or foot
- Bite in an extremity with underlying venous and/or lymphatic compromise
- Bite near or in a prosthetic joint or vascular graft
- Crush injury or puncture wound
- Cat bite (given propensity for association with deep puncture wounds)
- Delayed presentation (≥ 12 hours after a bite on the extremities and ≥ 24 hours after a bite on the face)

Warm-blooded animals such as skunks, dogs, cats, bats, foxes, and raccoons can transmit rabies. The rabies virus is transmitted when saliva from an infected animal comes into contact with an open wound, or any body opening such as the mouth or an eye. The infected animal can transmit rabies by biting or licking a person.

Initial Management

[WISHeS Illness and Injury Protocols: Bites](#)

1. Obtain subjective data: when bite occurred, any known information about animal, any cleaning/treatment attempts
2. Obtain objective data: break in skin, bleeding, size and location of wound, pain, shock, etc.
3. Provide or supervise treatment/care:
 - a. If severe bleeding, have someone call 911 and notify the principal. Apply pressure and additional bandages as needed. (Do not take soiled bandages off the wound).
 - b. Perform hand hygiene
 - c. Apply gloves if potential for exposure to blood and body fluids.

- d. Cleanse the wound thoroughly with soap and water to remove saliva.
 - e. If no or minimal bleeding, flush the bitten area with running water (2-3 minutes). Apply bandage if needed.
 - f. If possible, contain the animal.
4. Check immunization status to determine the status of tetanus immunization. Tetanus is an added danger in animal bites.
5. Notify parent(s):
 - a. Advise the student's parent/guardian to contact a health care provider immediately for any animal bites.
 - b. Advise the student's parent/guardian to see a health care provider and request a tetanus immunization if more than 5 years have elapsed since student's last dose.
 - c. Teach student signs and symptoms of infection: swelling, redness, warmth, throbbing pain, tenderness, fever, purulent drainage, swollen lymph glands (head/neck or groin), or red streaks leading from the wound indicating the spread of infection through the lymphatic circulation and that if these signs and symptoms occur, to consult with his/her health care provider.
6. All animal bites should be reported to Animal Services, Public Health Madison and Dane County by calling Police and Fire Dispatch at (608) 255-2345 (at the menu press "8"). Indicate that you are calling to report an animal bite. Dispatch will take your information and relay it to an Animal Services Officer. This notification is required by city and county ordinances. The animal control officer does not need to be called for animal scratches. Be prepared to provide student address to dispatcher. Animal control officers should NOT interview children at school.
7. Document in electronic student health record.
 - a. Subjective Data
 - i. Details of bite incident (what, when, where)
 - ii. Pain/Sensation
 - b. Objective Data
 - i. Disruption in skin
 - ii. Size/appearance of injury
 - iii. Amount of bleeding
 - iv. Vital signs
 - c. Interventions
 - i. First aid performed
 - ii. Referral for further care
 - iii. Referral to Animal Control
 - iv. Tetanus booster recommended
 - v. Education regarding self care of injury and monitoring for infection

If a bite or scratch involves a bat the bat should be retained safely and submitted to the public health department for possible rabies testing.

Follow-up

1. Notify school nurse of the incident.

Reference

Baddour, L.M. & Harper, M. (2022). Animal bites (dogs, cats, and other animals): Evaluation and management. *UpToDate*. Retrieved June 28, 2023 from https://www.uptodate.com/contents/animal-bites-dogs-cats-and-other-animals-evaluation-and-management?search=Dog%20and%20Cat%20bites&source=search_result&selectedTitle=1~150&usage_type=default&display_rank=1