

## Animal and Human Bites

Human and animal bites are more likely to get infected than other wounds. There are many germs (organisms) in animal and human mouths.

Usually bite wounds (except to the face and neck) are left open and not stitched (sutured) closed. This helps reduce the chance of infection. The wounds might be closed at a later date.

Depending on the animal and how the bite happened, we might give medicine to protect against rabies.

### How to care for yourself at home

- Keep your wound clean. Wash the wound with soap and fast running water.
- If you have a bandage covering your wound, keep it clean and dry. Change the bandage every day and when it gets wet or dirty.
- We might give you a prescription for an antibiotic. If you are to take an antibiotic, fill the prescription and take the medicine exactly as directed. Make sure you take the medicine until it is all gone – even if there are no signs of infection.
- If you have pain or discomfort, take pain medicine that you buy without a prescription such as acetaminophen (Tylenol or store brand) or ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, or store brand).

### When to get help

Go see your family doctor or go to a walk-in clinic if you notice any of the following:

- Increasing redness or swelling around the wound
- Increasing pain or soreness of the wound
- Yellow or green thick fluid draining from the wound (pus)
- A bad smell coming from the wound
- A fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)

### To learn more, it's good to ask

- Your family doctor
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)

Adapted from 'EB.100.An54 Animal and Human Bites' (March 2012) with permission from Vancouver Coastal Health