

# Animal Bites

## What is it?

**A bite or claw wound from an animal.**

## Plan of Action:

To care for a minor animal bite or claw wound, such as one that only breaks the skin, take these steps:

- Wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water.
- Apply an antibiotic cream or ointment and cover the bite with a clean bandage.

## Seek prompt medical care if:

- The wound is a deep puncture or you're not sure how serious it is.
- The skin is badly torn, crushed or bleeding significantly — first apply pressure with a bandage or clean cloth to stop the bleeding.
- You notice increasing swelling, redness, pain or oozing, which are warning signs of infection.
- You have questions about your risk of rabies or about rabies prevention. If the bite was caused by a cat or a dog, try to confirm that the animal's rabies vaccination is up to date. If the bite was caused by a wild animal, seek advice from your doctor about which animals are most likely to carry rabies.
- Bats often carry rabies and can infect humans without leaving obvious signs of a bite. This is why the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends that people in contact with bats — or even those

who are sleeping and awaken to find a bat in the bedroom — seek medical advice about rabies shots, even if they don't think they've been bitten.

- You haven't had a tetanus shot in the past 10 years — or five years if the wound is deep or dirty. You may need a booster shot.

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