

## HUMAN / ANIMAL BITES

Level II

Skill Level: RN

Definition: **Human** - Skin opened/wounded as result of tooth penetration from another person.  
**Animal** - Bites of any animal, provoked or unprovoked.

<p><b>Subjective:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• "I was in a fight and I have a cut on my hand."</li><li>• Suspected fight with a hand wound.</li><li>• "A stray cat bit me."</li><li>• "An animal bit me."</li></ul>	<p><b>Assessment:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Impaired skin integrity - <b>Animal or Human Bite.</b></li><li>• Risk for Infection</li></ul>
<p><b>Objective:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Vital signs normal.</li><li>• No erythema, localized heat, or drainage.</li><li>• Normal ROM in joint area involved.</li><li>• Acute bites may have bite mark evident, open or closed wound.</li><li>• May be an animal bite by a fox, skunk, raccoon or any other animal.</li></ul>	<p><b>Plan:</b> <b>At nursing discretion may use any of the below:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Cleanse with Betasept soap and water.</li><li>• Hot wet pack QID x 5 days/prn.</li><li>• Patient to watch wound for signs and symptoms of infection and recheck promptly if needed.</li><li>• For extensive injury especially with devitalized tissue, call the provider.</li><li>• Refer all bites of the hand or face for recheck within 48 hours and refer to provider.</li><li>• Report all animal bites to the Health Department.</li><li>• Check tetanus status, and give Tetanus Vaccine if indicated.</li></ul> <p><b>For all suspected human or cat bites:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Check for allergies to medication</li><li>• Augmentin 875 mg BID x 5 days. (Preventive treatment.)</li><li>• If allergy to Augmentin (Penicillin), call practitioner.</li><li>• Call practitioner and refer if signs of infection.</li></ul>

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### Nursing Education:

1. Where a fight is suspected and the patient has a wound of the hand, treat it as a human bite. Lesions suspected of being from a human mouth, especially over joint surfaces or tendons of the hand, will commonly become infected.
2. All wounds from the mouth of a human or a cat are at high risk of bacterial infection and should be treated prophylactically with antibiotics. This is for clean, uninfected wounds. If the wound shows signs of infection, more aggressive treatment may be indicated, and the medical provider should be contacted.
3. For animal bites:
  - Talk to the person bitten and other witnesses to get a first-hand account of what was happening when the bite occurred. Differentiate “unprovoked” and “provoked” bites. In the technical sense used for rabies investigations, these terms do not imply anything about the rights or wrongs of human (or animal!) behavior.
  - A bite is considered “*unprovoked*” when an animal crosses neutral space and attacks “for no reason.” Such incidents are rare.
  - Almost all bites are provoked, meaning that—in context—the bite was understandable (if not strictly speaking normal) behavior. Typical provoked bite situations include:
    - persons bitten by unfamiliar or non-domesticated animals they were interacting with (e.g. petting a stray cat, feeding squirrels, breaking up a fight between animals, cornering a raccoon on the porch, etc.);
    - persons bitten by injured animals (e.g., dogs hit by cars);
    - persons bitten by dogs protecting “their space,” (e.g., a front yard, their food).
4. Bites to the head or neck increase the urgency of the situation, as they decrease the time when rabies prophylaxis is likely to be effective. Conversely, adequate first aid, especially thorough washing of the wound with soap and water, greatly decreases risk.
5. Animal bites should be reported to the Oregon State Health Division.

### Patient Teaching:

Keep wound clean and dry. Report signs or symptoms of infection promptly.

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**APPROVED:**


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Medical Services Manager

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Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chief Medical Officer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Medical Director

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Effective Date: July 2009  
Revised: June 2009