

Animal and human bites

You have been treated in the Emergency Department following an animal or human bite. This leaflet gives advice on how to care for your wound at home.

Your treatment in the Emergency Department

- Animal bites (such as dog bites) and human bites are a relatively common type of injury.
- All bites and scratches will be cleaned thoroughly.
- A deep wound may not be stitched or may be closed with paper stiches (called steri-strips) due to the risk of infection. Leaving the wound open makes it easier to keep clean. Usually a dressing will be applied.
- If an arm has been affected, you might need to wear a high sling to help stop any swelling.
- Do not worry as most of these wounds will close as they heal.
- Rarely, the wound may require stitching at a later date, once the risk of infection has passed.

Do I need antibiotics or a tetanus?

Antibiotics will only be prescribed if there is a risk of infection.

If you have not had a full course of tetanus vaccinations, you may need a tetanus injection.

Human bites

In the case of a bite from a human, a blood sample may be collected for further tests. You may also be given the first dose of anti-hepatitis B vaccine injection. In this case, you will need to make an appointment with your GP for further follow-up treatment that may include:

- Completion of a course of anti-hepatitis B vaccine.
- Counselling.
- Further blood tests at three and six months.

Important information

Following any animal or human bite, you should seek further advice immediately if you develop any of these symptoms:

- Increased redness or swelling around the wound.
- A red line extending from the wound up your arm or leg.
- The wound becomes more painful.
- Pus is leaking from the wound.
- A high temperature or feeling unwell.

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

K O'Hagan, Lead Advanced Practitioner, Emergency Department, June 2021.

Next review due: June 2023